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OLD TESTAMENT BIOGRAPHIES

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BROADMAN PRESS
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

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The Sunday School Board
of the
Southern Baptist Convention
Nashville, Tenn.

Printed in the United States of America
1000—7-35—3

OLD TESTAMENT BIOGRAPHIES

PART I

FROM ADAM TO MOSES

BY

H. W. TRIBBLE

PART II

FROM JOSHUA TO DAVID

BY

JOHN L. HILL

PART III

FROM SOLOMON TO MALACHI

BY

KYLE M. YATES

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Old Testament Biographies comprises three parts as follows:

Part I. From Adam to Moses

Part II. From Joshua to David

Part III. From Solomon to Malachi

The three parts are also published and offered as three separate book units. It is believed that many Bible students, especially students in educational institutions, will be pleased to have the entire Old Testament series in one volume. The authors, it must be recognized, possess exceptional equipment for their tasks, while this approach to the study of the Old Testament must be at once fascinating and challenging.

When the book is studied with a view to awards in the Training Course for Sunday School Workers, the usual requirements will of course be observed. When it is offered as a text in educational institutions with a view to college credit, the methods and standards of the college will be accepted as a basis for the bestowal of training awards.

The questions and outlines offered at the close of the chapters are designed for possible use when the books are studied in popular training schools or classes. More advanced students may find them helpful if after they have studied the books they should wish to teach them in such popular schools.

CONTENTS

PART I

I	Adam the First to the Beginning of the Semitic Race	11
II.	Abraham	25
III.	Isaac	39
IV.	Jacob the Deceiver	51
V	Israel the Champion of God, and Joseph the Dreamer	65
VI.	Joseph the Servant of God	80
VII	Moses the Deliverer	94
VIII.	Moses the Law-Giver	109
IX.	Moses the Prophet	123

PART II

- I.	Joshua	143
II.	Caleb	152
III.	Deborah	161
IV.	Gideon	170
V.	Ruth	179
VI.	Hannah	188
- VII	Samuel	197
VIII.	Saul	206
IX.	David	215

PART III

I.	Solomon	227
II	Early Days of the Divided Kingdom	240
III	Elijah and Elisha	250
IV.	A Century of Turmoil	262
V.	Amos and Hosea	273
VI.	Judah's Golden Age	286
VII	Manasseh, Josiah, and Jeremiah	297
VIII.	Ezekiel and Daniel	308
IX.	After the Exile	318
	Bibliography	329
	Bible Bibliography	330

PART I

FROM ADAM TO MOSES

CHAPTER I

ADAM THE FIRST TO THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMITIC RACE

Scripture quotations taken from American Standard Version.

The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. That is what the name implies. The account starts with the very beginning of all things—"In the beginning God." If you try to go back beyond that you have only God; he had no beginning, for he is eternal. Beyond that also you have only eternity, for time started in the beginning, that is, in creation. And beyond that you have only spirit, for all material things began to exist in the creation. So the writer starts his account with the very beginning of time and things—how far back that goes no one knows; the writer does not attempt to tell us, for he does not seem to be concerned with the number of years that have elapsed since the beginning of history. His chief concern seems to be to show the presence and power and purpose of God in it all, and our chief concern should be to understand that. We are not seeking charts, maps, and schedules, but purposes that our God is bringing to realization in history.

Were you surprised to see the designation, "Adam the First," in the chapter heading? Perhaps you wondered about the meaning of the name. The writer of this book had three reasons for using the name Adam for the first man. First, because it was the common word among the Hebrews for man as a being in distinction from animals. It referred to the race of man, including men and women. Often in the Old Testament we have the Hebrew word translated man, instead of Adam. Examples may be found in Psalm 8: 5, Ezekiel 2: 1, and many other passages, where the Hebrew word is

the same that is used for Adam here in the early chapters of Genesis. Second, because the word in the original was kin to another word which meant ground, and which is used in Genesis 2: 7. The third reason for using this word was that it was kin to yet another term that refers to likeness, and that occurs in Genesis 1: 26. So when Moses wrote of Adam he was thinking of the first man, the first human being, who was made out of the dust of the ground, and in the likeness of God.

I. ADAM THE GREAT

What is the theme of the first two chapters of Genesis? What relation do these chapters have to the rest of the story that is unfolded in the Bible? Do they have a message for us today? Or, are they merely ancient history? We shall answer these and similar questions with greater clarity if we keep in mind the fact that man is the central figure in all of God's creation, and hence in this narrative.

God created progressively, with man in view as the climax of his work. He had first to bring order out of chaos, something in orderly arrangement out of nothing. This he did, dividing the light from darkness; establishing the atmospheric conditions and clouds that surround the earth; separating the continents from the oceans in the earth; and commanding the land to bring forth plant life. The stars and planets were established in their orbits; the seas were filled with all kinds of fish; birds of all varieties were made to fly in the air; and the earth was filled with all the species of animal life; and to all plant and animal life was given the power of growth and reproduction. Lastly, God made man. Up the ascending scale of creation the Maker of all things came until he approached the climax of all of his work, man. When we think of Adam as the primitive man compared with the man of the twentieth century, we may not think of him as so great; but when we think of him as the accomplishment of God's greatest purpose in creative ac-

tivity, and as possessing the capacities and potentialities that make man what he is today, we begin to appreciate his greatness.

The first verse of the first chapter of Genesis tells us that God is the Creator of all things. "In the beginning God created." There the Bible starts, and there the Bible rests its case in the matter of accounting for the origin of the universe and life. The name for God that is used here suggests infinite power, and surely it required unlimited power to do the work of creation. God is also spoken of as spirit—"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." In Job 33: 4 we find these words: "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." The New Testament teaches that all things were created through the eternal Christ (see John 1: 3; Col. 1: 16; and Heb. 1: 2). Thus God as he is revealed to us throughout the Bible was active in creation. The point is not whether the Genesis account of creation teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, but that all the revelation of God adds meaning to his work in creation. The same God who created all things is man's Redeemer.

When God approached the task of creating man he followed a different method. Three features distinguished the making of man from the rest of God's creative work. The first was the divine council and decree—"God said, Let us make man." The second was the divine type after which he was formed—"Let us make man in our image; after our likeness." The third feature was the fact that God created him immediately—in producing other forms of life he had simply said, "Let the waters bring forth," or, "Let the earth bring forth;" but now he says, "Let us make man." So also there were three stages in the creation of man: (1) "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground"; (2) "And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life"; (3) "And man became a living soul." These stages were not necessarily set apart

in three separate periods of time. They were merely separate phases of God's work in creating man.

The chief thing for us to notice about man's creation is that he was made in the image of God. That accounts for his position with reference to all the rest of creation, he has "dominion over all the earth." The wondrous things that we are doing through science today are made possible because man bears in himself the image of God. That accounts also for the immortality of the soul, for to be made in the image of God is to be made capable of unending fellowship with him. Thus God put man over all his creation to serve him forever.

It was not enough that man should be made to live above the animals and below God, but he must be capable of building a home and reproducing the human family upon the earth. And so God made man of opposite sexes, male and female, man and woman. He made each for the other, and so ordained marriage and the home. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Here we have the establishment of a principle that runs all the way through history and society. Marriage and the home are ordained of God, planted in the very foundation of human life for the accomplishment of his wise and good purposes. They are not of man's design and making and therefore are not to be set aside by him, but are to be kept sacred and under God's control.

II. ADAM THE SINNER

As in the first section we studied the beginning of human life, so now we trace the beginning of human sin. Man was surrounded with all the blessings that could come through creation. Everything was designed for his happiness: he had work to do, and the earth was rich in resources for him to develop; he had abundant provisions for food, shelter, and clothing as he found need for them; and he had fellowship with God. Surely he

should have been content in serving God in this happy relationship!

But the tempter was there. Where he came from, and when he came into being the story does not relate. And that suggests that the purpose of the account is not to settle speculative questions, such as "Where did the devil come from?" but to give practical guidance in solving the problem of sin. Where evil came from we may not know, but that we have it with us we cannot doubt. Recognizing its presence we must seek to understand its nature. Other passages in the Bible lead us to believe that this tempter who seduced Adam and Eve was Satan, the Devil (see Rom. 16: 20; Rev. 12: 9; and 20: 2).

The story of the beginning of sin in the first family is the story of the propagation of sin in every family, and in every human life. Notice how the tempter approached Eve. Did he say to her, "God has been wondrously good to you in giving you so many things to make your life happy"? He did not. He said something like this: "Has not God limited your freedom here by holding something back from you?" And when the woman replied that God had warned them that if they should break his commandment they would die, the tempter went on to say that they would not die, but that God was denying them some privilege which should bring them great pleasure. There are the first two steps in the temptation that wrought the downfall of man. The first was the awakening of the desire for something more than God had permitted. It was unholy ambition, the desire for something that did not rightfully belong to man. The second step was doubting the goodness and justice of God. Eve was led to believe that God was deliberately keeping her and her husband in unhappy conditions of limitations, whereas if she would disobey his will she would enter into a freedom through experience that she could not have otherwise.

Then followed the third step in yielding to temptation, which was meditating upon the thing that the tempter

was holding out to her, dreaming of the pleasures of sin: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food"—hunger for the unrighteous satisfaction of physical appetite—; "and that it was pleasant to the eyes"—attractive and alluring indulgence of vanity—; "and a tree to be desired to make one wise"—promising greater knowledge through the experience of evil. That is not simply the story of the first temptation. It is the statement of the principle on which all temptation works. It is the same way that Cain, Jacob, Achan, David, Ahab, and others were led to commit their great sins. It is the same way that Satan tried to accomplish the downfall of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. It is the same way that temptation comes to every one of us today.

Then came the climax of temptation, the act of sin. She and her husband broke God's commandment together. Individual sin immediately became social sin. One sin is no sooner committed than another is begun, and so it multiplies until a network of evil envelops the life that yields to temptation. That has been the experience of every sinner.

III. ADAM THE SUFFERER

The writer does not leave the account with the beginning of sin, but goes on to tell of its results and the beginning of suffering. The story is remarkably complete. Notice some of the results of the first sin. The man and his wife hid themselves from God because they were afraid. The temptation that they had thought would bring them delightful experience and new freedom actually made them the slaves of guilt and fear. The cowards that they became, they tried to run away from God! The second result that we notice is their unwillingness to confess blame. The man blamed it on the woman, and the woman blamed it on the serpent. But all of them had to endure the consequences of sin.

That is the way sin works; no one who plays with it can escape its curse.

Then as we glance through the remaining sentences in the third chapter of Genesis our eyes light upon these words that tell of other results of sin: curse, enmity, bruise, sorrow. But all of the consequences of sin may be summed up in this one word, suffering. Physical suffering came to the man in many burdens that would beset him in maintaining his existence upon the earth; and to the woman in bearing her children. Mental suffering came to both in the haunting fear that would always be their lot as they tried to hide their sins from God. Social suffering would be their increasing portion as their family grew, for there would be disharmony between the man and the woman, and that would be reproduced in the children.

But their greatest suffering would be spiritual. Sin inevitably brought on a separation from God that meant a godless life for man. When God told the man and the woman that if they sinned against him they would die, he was warning them against this spiritual separation, for that is death. He told them, in effect, that sin would drive them out of his presence. And it came to pass even as he had told them.

The result of sin has ever been suffering and death. All the way from the sin of the first man in the garden to the atoning death of the Son of man on Calvary's cross, sin has left its stream of suffering.

IV. CAIN THE MURDERER

If in the last episode of the story of Adam and Eve we saw the beginning of suffering, here we see the beginning of social crime, or the rapid spread of sin and its consequences in the family of man. Cain and Abel were brothers in the first family, but they were different. Both of them sought to worship God with an offering, but Abel had faith (see Heb. 11: 4), whereas Cain was content with a less spiritual act. It became evident that

God accepted with favor the offering that Abel brought, while he did not approve Cain's act of worship. Now in the reaction of Cain to that discrimination we see the seed of murder working in his heart. Jealousy, envy, anger,—the sins of the heart—began upsetting him and giving him an ugly outlook on life. He began to imagine that his troubles were all caused by his brother.

It was at this stage of his sin that God came to Cain to warn him, and to help him to resist his temptation. While the storm clouds of envy, jealousy, and anger were gathering in his heart Jehovah warned him concerning the nature of sin and the way to overcome it. He said something like this: "Why are you angry and downcast? Do you not know that if you do the good thing you will have the joy of true excellence? On the other hand, if you do not do that which is right, sin is at the door of your life. Now the thing to do is to conquer it while it is only a desire in your heart, otherwise it will conquer you." God is ever coming to the sinner to warn him about his sin, to help him to keep from sinning, for he is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3: 9).

The way Cain reacted to God's warning is the way sin grows in human hearts. If he had accepted the advice that came to him, and had prayed to the Lord for help to overcome the evil spirit in his heart, he would not have committed murder. But instead of doing that he went out and talked with Abel, and it was the kind of talk that led to murder. While he talked with him the spirit of jealousy and anger was smoldering in Cain's heart, and the more he said the more envious and angry he became, until in a fit of rage he struck his own brother dead.

And so on the earliest pages of human history, sin left its ugliest mark, premeditated murder. It would seem that Adam's sin was little in comparison, but it was the seed of which Cain's was the fruit. As long as man obeys God he is able to overcome sin, but when he

chooses the path of wilful disobedience he becomes the victim of evil. Cain killed his own brother who was a good man. He did it in the face of God's warning, and so it was an act of wilful sin against God. He did it because his heart was filled with an evil spirit. When we ask why Cain murdered Abel, 1 John 3: 12 answers, "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Murder is an ugly fruit that grows on the tree of sin, a tree that has its roots deep in the spirit of jealousy, envy, anger, and other ungodly emotions that stir in the secret places of the human heart.

When God came to Cain after he had committed his great sin, he tried, like Adam and Eve, to escape the judgment. He said he did not know where his brother was, but of course he did know. Then, in a bad temper, he said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Whether he intended to or not, he touched upon the central principle that should always keep man from murder. We are all brothers, created by the same God, for the same purpose of serving God in happy fellowship. Each is his brother's keeper, the custodian of the welfare of every other man, and therefore murder is a sin against God and the social order that he has established.

When God pronounced his judgment upon Cain he became frightened lest some one should kill him. Cowardice, self-interest, fear,—these are ever the companions of sin in the heart of the unrighteous. He went forth from the presence of God, with the distinction of being the first fugitive and murderer in the earth.

V. ENOCH THE EXCEPTION

Following the account of Cain's great sin and its consequences, the writer gives us a long and dreary recital of the "vital statistics" of the descendants of Adam as far as Noah. The record varies only in names and numbers, with the exception of Enoch. There was no difference in the circumstances under which all these characters lived, yet Enoch lived a different life. And it

was not a difference that was accidental, but one that was the result of diligently meeting the conditions on which man may have fellowship with God. We are not told that all of the others listed were extremely sinful; in fact, there is nothing said of them aside from the fact that they were born, lived, and then died.

Enoch was the exception to the rule because he "walked with God." That is a phrase that characterizes the religious life, the life of devotion to God. It is used twice here in the brief statement about Enoch. It also occurs in the next chapter (6: 9) in reference to Noah. In the seventeenth chapter Abraham is commanded to walk before God. The same idea is expressed in many other passages of Scripture. It indicates continued faith in God and obedience to his will. That is the interpretation that the writer of Hebrews puts upon it (Heb. 11: 5). Walking with God means harmonious relationship with him, loving what he loves, seeing life from his point of view, seeking to do his will in every experience of life.

Walking with God indicates progress in fellowship with him. When a man walks he goes somewhere, and when he walks with some one he goes somewhere with him; they grow in friendship. And so while others were merely living and dying, Enoch was growing in the fellowship with God that is life eternal. When his time came to die this unusual man did not have to go the way others went, but "God took him." "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death" (Heb. 11: 5). A little girl is reported to have told it in these words: "God was accustomed to take walks with Enoch, and one day they went farther than usual, and God said, 'Enoch, you are a long way from home; better come in and stay with me'; and so he went, and has stayed ever since."

VI. NOAH THE RIGHTEOUS

The law of sin is the law of multiplication. From little to more it grows until it would seem to be beyond

all reach and calculation. "In the days of Noah God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Sin everywhere! Had God done right in creating man? It seems that he raised that question as he looked upon the wickedness of his greatest creature. "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Over in the New Testament we are told to "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4: 30). The simple story of the whole Bible is that the heart of our heavenly Father is grieved by our sin. He made us for a better life than that of sinfulness. But would it not have been better, some one asks, if God had made man incapable of choosing sin? Then there would have been no sin to grieve him. But neither would there have been any voluntary and faithful worship to please him. If there is no opportunity for a Cain to develop, there is also no opportunity for an Enoch to walk with God by faith. God created man for righteousness, but man must have the power of choosing between obedience and disobedience if his righteousness is to be of the highest type. It was his desire from the first that his creature should choose the path of righteous service and fellowship.

But that purpose in creation was frustrated by sin. What was God to do? Surely he could not stand aside and allow sin to run its course until it had completely destroyed the family of man from the face of the earth! His holy nature cried out in protest. Sin should be judged and destroyed, and the righteous should be protected. Those two acts were accomplished in the flood.

Was God just in bringing the flood to destroy sinful man? The answer lies in the history of his treatment of his creature before this event. He had given Adam and Eve clear instruction about the consequences of sin; had warned Cain before he murdered Abel; had called Enoch to walk by his side; had counseled with Noah; and with all of them he had walked frequently that in

his wonderful presence righteousness might become attractive to them. But now he says, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." In other words, God's Spirit strives with man as long as there is any hope of saving him, until in the depth of sin he literally drives God away. The Lord's forbearance has been exhausted, and now his judgment of sin must be revealed. The flood is brought on to wipe out a sinful race that a fresh start might be made with a good man. Surely, with history to warn them, Noah and his family and their descendants will always seek to walk uprightly before God! We shall see. In the meantime we may ask whether punishment alone abolishes sin today. Do courts and prisons blot out sin from the earth?

Through the flood God preserves Noah and his family, and the animals that they took with them into the ark. All men and beasts left on the outside are destroyed. Then, after many days, the waters recede and the occupants disembark on dry land to begin life anew. Noah's first act is a good omen. He builds an altar and worships the Lord. God is pleased and pledges that he will never again destroy the earth with a flood, and as a sign of his promise he puts the rainbow in the clouds.

VII. SHEM THE FATHER OF THE SEMITES

After the account of Noah's life we have another long list of generations, given evidently to show the accomplishment of God's purpose through history. Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Shem was chosen to receive the special favor of the Lord. The other two were to be subordinate to him. In the line of Shem's descendants came Abraham, who became the father of the Hebrews. The Hebrews are also called Shemites, or Semites, or the Semitic race, because they are descendants of Shem. It was through Abraham that God promised to bless the people of the earth.

Much might be said about the nations that descended from these three sons of Noah, but there would be no

great profit derived from such tracing of genealogies. This is the lesson: all of them are kin—cousins so many times removed, nevertheless they are kin—and all have one and the same God over them. “Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also” (Rom. 3: 29). In his desire to make a new and better race of men on the earth God began to prepare for the coming of his Son to redeem the world from sin. Jesus was born a Jew, a Semite, but he became the Saviour of the world, that in him all the races and nations might become one family in the kingdom of God.

QUESTIONS

- Why do we have an account of creation?
- Why was the first man called Adam?
- Give the order of creation.
- What does the name of God in the first chapter of Genesis signify?
- In what way was the creation of man distinguished from the rest of God's creative work?
- What were the three stages in the creation of man?
- How did the tempter approach Eve?
- Is that the way temptation comes today?
- Indicate the progress of temptation in the experience of Eve.
- What were the chief results of man's sin?
- What is death?
- Characterize Cain and Abel.
- Why did Cain kill Abel?
- What do we learn from Cain's response to God's warning?
- What was the result of Cain's sin in his own life?
- What do we know about Enoch?
- What do we learn from his life?
- Tell the story of the flood. Why was it sent?
- Who was Shem? Does the Bible teach the kinship of all people? Why?

OUTLINE

CHAPTER I

Genesis 1: 1 to 11: 26

GENESIS A BOOK OF BEGINNINGS—1: 1-25

Reason for the account of creation

The name Adam

ADAM THE GREAT—1: 25 to 2: 25

Crown of God's progressive creation

Different method employed in his creation

Made in God's image

The home established

ADAM THE SINNER—3. 1-7

Beginning of human sin

Presence of the tempter in the garden

The way of temptation, culminating in sin

ADAM THE SUFFERER—3: 8-24

Temptation promised freedom, but sin made man the slave of guilt and fear

The result of sin: physical, mental, and spiritual suffering

CAIN THE MURDERER—4

Brothers characterized in the act of worship

God warns Cain. Cain's reaction

Murder committed and denied

ENOCH THE EXCEPTION—5

Dreary fifth chapter

Enoch characterized by the way he walked

NOAH THE RIGHTEOUS—6: 1 to 9: 17

God grieved at the multiplication of sin

Why sin was allowed

The flood sent in judgment

SHEM THE FATHER OF THE SEMITES—9: 18 to 11: 26

Kinship of all people

One God over all

CHAPTER II

ABRAHAM

Who was Abraham and who were his people? Why does he hold such a prominent place in early Bible history? What do we know about the time and the countries in which he lived? Why did he move about so much? And what significance does all of this have for us today? Our minds bristle with questions when we think of this ancient patriarch. Perhaps all of them will not be answered here, but we should take them with us to a fresh study of Genesis. And even as we are attempting to answer the ones that have been raised others will occur to us.

Abram and his people were Semites, descendants of Shem, as were many of the people among whom he moved in his travels. We recall that Shem was one of the sons of Noah, and Noah was the righteous man with whom God began to build a better race upon the earth after the flood. God chose Shem and his descendants to receive his special blessings, and now Abram comes into that line of promise. His connection with the purpose of God was more important than his connection by blood with Shem, for that purpose included the revelation of God and the redemption of man. All that was done in succeeding generations toward the achievement of that twofold purpose was involved in the relation between God and Abram.

Here we may begin to reckon time and dates. The other events that we have been studying occurred in history, but they are rather obscured in primitive times, and we have no reliable mile-posts by which to chart the dates and the years. But with Abram we come into

the realm of dated history. He lived about 2000 B.C., in Ur, in southern Babylonia, between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. It was a favorable position for the development of commerce and civilization. Ur was the chief city of all that country, as well as one of the oldest, having come to the peak of its glory as early as 3500 B.C. It was the seat of the worship of the moon god Nannar or Sin, whose massive temple stood seventy feet above the plain.

Much valuable archæological research work has been done in the region of Ur,* the results of which indicate that the civilization of Abram's day was old and well advanced. Writing was practiced, governments were well founded, the arts were studied, and the people engaged in extended commerce. Cities had been established and kings reigned thousands of years before Abram's day. Down in Egypt, whither he went, the pyramids were already hoary with age, symbols of an earlier civilization that extended many centuries into the past.

I. BLESSED TO BLESS

With civilizations advancing, business developing, people building cities, why should God call a man to do something different? Why not let the world go on its way and take the consequences, whatever they might be? Because God had something better in view than the world by itself could possibly realize. His desire was to reveal himself to man, for he knew full well that man would never come to know him in righteous fellowship without revelation. His desire was also to redeem man from the sin that was ever carrying him deeper into destruction. The people all around Abram were worshipping idols, and usually idolatry carried with it many forms of immorality. The descendants of Shem had gone in the ways of the people of the days of Noah, and a new beginning must be made. Only this time it would

*See *Biblical Background*, by Dr. J. McKee Adams, pages 36-41.

not be a plan involving the destruction of many, but the cultivation of covenant relations with a chosen few. God must choose one man with whom to make the start.

But why did he choose Abram, rather than some one else? Because here was a man, like Enoch in an earlier period, who was ready. While others were indulging in unseemly practices before images of wood and stone, he was seeking the quiet places where he could commune with the eternal Spirit. Across many generations the story of Noah's righteousness had been handed along from father to son, and he was cherishing the hope and determination and the prayer that he might be something like his illustrious ancestor. One thing he determined to do: he would walk with God.

How did God call him? Was it a voice that was audible to his physical ears? Or was it the inaudible message of the Spirit to his soul that came in the quiet time of meditation? What difference does it make how it came, so long as it came to him from God? Wherever a man is ready to listen and obey, God is ready and able to make his will known. Did the Lord reveal everything to him at once? On the contrary, he led him step by step. He told him enough at the first to let him know that he had a special purpose for his life, and that he would guide him and protect him until the accomplishment of that purpose, as far as it could be achieved in his life. That was enough for the beginning, but to enable God to work out his plan it was necessary for him to leave his people and go to a different land. After that as he needed new assurance and new guidance his God was at hand to speak to him, and to steady him.

Where did God tell Abram to go? "Unto a land that I will show thee." He did not let him know at first what the end of his journey would be, but he let him know unmistakably that he must leave his home country and kindred. They were worshipers of idols, and their influence on him would tend to hinder the growth of the knowledge of the true God. He would not lose

by leaving home. His God would provide for him, would make him great. There is always an abundant recompense for all that God calls upon us to give up. Jesus said that if we leave father or mother, houses or land, for his sake, the reward will be a hundredfold here and life everlasting beyond. If he commands one, "sell all that thou hast," the promise is, "thou shalt have treasure in heaven." So it is ever true that God is mindful of our needs when he calls us to follow him.

God's call is not to every one to leave home, but it is to every one to follow him. It may be to some to go back home and witness for him, as Jesus told the healed Gadarene demoniac. But Abram must go, and he went, taking his wife and Lot, his nephew, and his servants and possessions with him. It was a day of such travel, and so he probably did not attract much notice. There were many who traveled from place to place, making their homes wherever they chanced to stop. They sought better pasturage, better opportunities for making money, more food, or more places of amusement in the cities. Abram was different. The unseen hand of the all-wise God rested gently upon his heart, guiding him here and there, not aimlessly but with a purpose that embraced the blessings of heaven for the children of men for untold generations to come. What a journey was begun here! More important than the voyage of Columbus! The redemption of a world was in the balance when this patriarch of seventy-five started toward the western world.

He was to be God's medium of blessings. "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing." God would form a covenant with him, which would later be confirmed in Moses, and which would embrace a great nation. Jews and Christians alike date their commission to serve the living God from the call of Abram. It is a missionary challenge that should never be forgotten. Jesus interpreted the promise to Abram as fulfilled in himself.

II. BECOMES A DECEIVER

What was the first thing that Abram did when he stopped at a new place to sojourn a while? What is the first thing that you do when you move to a place where you are not known? His custom was to erect an altar and worship God. We are not stretching matters when we say that wherever he established his home he also established his church relationship: a splendid example for Christians to follow today.

His first stop was at Shechem. It was here that his grandson dug a well some years later, and that his greatest descendant talked with a Samaritan woman about the way of life. Then he journeyed on to Bethel, where he built another altar. Bethel means "House of God," the place where God is found and worshiped. This place is to figure in his experience again, and it is to hold a larger place in Jacob's religious life.

He did not tarry long at Bethel, for there was a famine in the land. There was grass in Egypt, not too far away, and so he journeyed toward the south. When he entered Egypt he broke his rule of faith, failing to erect his altar of worship. It was a good thing to do at Shechem and at Bethel, and it would have been equally wise in the land of the Pharaohs. If he had adhered to his habit of public worship in strange lands the account of his life would have been different. He was faithful in the great issues of life, but fearful in some of the circumstances in connection with a journey. He would pitch his whole life on faith in the promise of God, but he was afraid to trust the Lord in a mere detail of that promise.

Why did he lie about Sarai, and ask her to say that she was his sister instead of his wife? (She was, in fact, his half-sister before he married her, but it was a lie nevertheless to say that she was not his wife.) She was a beautiful woman, and he was afraid that some of the Egyptians would fall in love with her and kill him in order to get her as wife. Surely that is cowardice

going to an extreme! And there is no indication that he had any idea of trying to redeem her later. He would sacrifice her to save himself. The great man of faith is not very great here. But we must not judge him by the standards of the twentieth century. Although it was wrong then, and not to be condoned, yet woman was not held on the high level of esteem that she enjoys today.

When Pharaoh discovered his mistake he sent for Abram and said, "What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Now, therefore, behold thy wife, take her and go thy way." And he was sent away with his wife and possessions, judged unfaithful by a man who made no pretense to faith in Jehovah. What a pity! A believer rebuked by an unbeliever! Abram had an opportunity to witness for the true God before Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but he lost it through his moral failure and was sent away in disgrace. How often that has happened when Christians have been lacking in faithfulness and steadfastness in their dealings with people outside the church! Christianity is always discounted by an unbelieving world when professing Christians compromise morally with the world.

But God did not cast Abram off because he slipped. Here is a splendid example of divine forbearance with man in his weakness. Abram was allowed to become rich in spite of his faithlessness and because of the mercy of God. He was to learn, as all of us need to learn, that the only true prosperity comes on the basis of faithful obedience to God. Abram went back to Bethel, where he had built an altar, and there he worshiped God in confession of his sin and in reconsecration of his life.

III. BREAKS WITH LOT

The peril of riches! Here is the first rich man mentioned in the Bible, and we no sooner hear of his riches than we must listen to the story of family dissension. There are problems that are inevitably connected with

accumulating wealth, as there are other problems that are a part of poverty; and they are never solved on the basis of selfishness, but in gracious forbearance and in the willingness to sacrifice self in the interest of others. How many times have families been divided over the question of the division of property! The story runs through history like an ugly scar that will not end. We would avoid many tragic blunders if we would read again the story of Abram and follow his example in such matters.

Lot had been with Abram in all of his travels, and had shared in the accumulation of his wealth. But now their growing flocks and herds required wider pasture ranges, and yet the two families were trying to keep together. It is not surprising that the servants quarreled. The herds were constantly getting mixed; Lot's shepherds would claim some of Abram's sheep, and Abram's servants would seek to bring back some of their master's wandering cattle, and a fight would ensue. From an occasional misunderstanding it grew until it became a daily affair.

Abram was the older and the wealthier of the two, and the head of the family. He would have been acting within his rights according to the standards of the world if he had spoken harshly to Lot and told him to whip his servants into submission, or he would hold him accountable. But instead of that he spoke to him kindly and unselfishly: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou take the right hand, then I will go to the left." Let us inscribe those words indelibly upon our hearts and cherish them as a motto for all family, church, social, and industrial relations.

We would expect Lot to say, "Not so, Uncle Abram, for by all rights you should have first choice, and then

I shall be glad to take what is left." But Lot was not that kind. Here were two different men, and a transaction involving money and property revealed the true character of each. Off toward the Jordan was a well-watered plain that reminded one of the fertile section of Egypt, which was clearly the better part of the land, and Lot unhesitatingly chose it. But he failed to consider seriously enough the dangers of living among the wicked people of the cities of the plain. His selfish choice affected the rest of his life; it was the beginning of tragedy.

As a further indication of his love for Lot and his desire to protect him, Abram went to his rescue when he was taken prisoner in battle, and by skilful maneuvering and heroic boldness defeated his captors, and brought him and his family and property back to Sodom. It was as he was returning from this expedition that Melchizedek appeared to him and blessed him. Abram gave to him a tenth of his possessions, which fact indicates the antiquity of the law of the tithe, and is referred to by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews

Once more God renewed his promise to his servant that he would make of his children a mighty nation. Abram believed and trusted Jehovah, but the fact remained that his first child had not yet been born. It had been ten years since he entered Canaan, and he and Sarai were getting old. She became discouraged and persuaded her husband to resort to a custom that was in vogue in that day and take another wife. He consented and took Sarai's maid Hagar, and a son was born to him by her, who received the name Ishmael. We may be tempted to criticize Abram again for his laxness, but it is to be remembered that it was the ordinary thing in those days for a man to have as many wives as he wanted and could support. In our day of civilization under the floodlight of the full revelation in Jesus Christ we must adhere to loftier moral standards. Abram's first sin in this case was his failure to wait patiently and obediently for the will of Jehovah to be done.

IV. BEGINNING OF THE COVENANT

Up to this time the grand old patriarch has been known as Abram, which means exalted father, but now his name is changed to Abraham, which means father of a multitude. By this new name he is to be known through the remainder of his life, and throughout history; it is the name that is immediately related to the establishment of the covenant.

The covenant was a compact entered into between God and Abraham, in which each pledged to do certain things for the other. On his side God promised to bless Abraham, give him a family that would grow into a mighty multitude who should inherit the land of Canaan as an abiding possession, and he would always be their God. On the other side Abraham must pledge to walk before God in righteous obedience, and devote himself and all his family and descendants to the service of God. All of the most binding covenants that the ancients made were sealed with blood, which was a symbol of the pledge of life to observe the conditions established. It was also a symbol of the commingling of the lives of those who entered into the covenant agreement. Circumcision as the sign of this covenant indicated that all of Abraham's descendants were included in the pledge that he made to God.

V. BIRTH OF ISAAC

Along with the change in Abraham's name in connection with the establishment of the covenant, his wife's name was also changed. Henceforth, she was to be known as Sarah, which means princess. She was to be the mother of kings, and princes, and nations. Jehovah was about to bestow a great blessing upon her. She was ninety years old, and her husband was ninety-nine, when the Lord informed Abraham that she would give birth to the long-promised son, and she laughed because it seemed improbable to her according to the laws of nature. Abraham thought that perhaps the promise would yet be ful-

filled in Ishmael, but God assured him that it would be a son born to Sarah.

It was about this time that an evil report came concerning the cities where Lot was living. The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah had become "very grievous," and God decided to destroy them. But Lot was there and therefore Abraham was deeply concerned. He interceded for the cities on behalf of Lot, but because there were not enough righteous people in them to justify God in sparing them, they were destroyed. Nevertheless, Lot and his family were given ample opportunity to escape, as a further evidence of God's interest in Abraham and in answer to his prayer, although only Lot and his two single daughters took the warning seriously enough to flee. They tarried a while in the little town of Zoar, and then took up their abode in a cave in the mountains. This is the last scene that the Bible gives us in the life of Lot. He left his uncle rich and selfish, choosing the way of ease and pleasure that leads to sin, and he came back to the hills poor and defeated. We leave him to live out his few remaining years with his daughters on a very low moral level.

Finally, the oft-given and long-cherished promise was fulfilled and Isaac was born to Sarah. She named him Isaac, which means "laughter," for she said, "God hath made me to laugh; and every one that heareth will laugh with me." It was the laughter of joy over the extraordinary manifestation of God's favor upon her.

The home developed an atmosphere of happiness, which was marred only by the jealousy between Sarah and Hagar. But God had plans for both sons. To prevent further mixing, and to maintain a congenial home life for Isaac, they had to be separated, and so Hagar took her departure and raised her child in the wilderness.

It would seem that the faith of Abraham had been tested quite enough, but he was yet to endure the supreme trial of his life. His son, the gift of God and the child of promise, who had brought the laughter of joy

into his home, now meant everything to him. His hope for making his family great in the earth centered in him. Just as the patient waiting of the long years had come into a happy fruition, God said, "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering." What would you have done if you had been in the patriarch's place? Do not bother about criticizing God for asking Abraham to make a sacrifice of his son, for that was so common among the people of that day that Abraham would not think it strange. And one purpose in the whole experience was to teach the lesson that the children of the covenant should not follow the common practice of offering human sacrifices in religious worship. The strange part was that God who had given Isaac to him should now propose to take him away. And that continues to be a problem with believing people long after the practice of sacrificing children has died out. God calls an only son from a happy Christian home to be a missionary in a foreign land. The father had intended that he should follow him in his business and be wealthy and prominent, and now the boy says that God is calling him to an obscure place in the heart of China to live and serve as a poor man among the poorest of people. Is the faith of the parents equal to the test? Or, in another instance, a child who has made a home heavenly by his presence is claimed by God through death. Do the parents rebel, or trust and follow? Instead of criticizing, let us compare our experiences and faith with Abraham's.

His faith held up nobly as he deliberately gave back to God the child who symbolized all that Jehovah had given to him. What faith! The author of Hebrews says that Abraham believed that God would raise his son from the dead and give him back to him (Heb. 11: 17-19). Doctor Sampey suggests that it might well have been in connection with this experience that the words of Jesus were based (John 8: 56-58), that as he was

called upon to sacrifice his son he received a revelation of the saving sacrifice that God purposed to make in his Son on behalf of the world. Would that our faith might be as steady and unquestioning and forward-looking as that of Abraham.

VI. ESTIMATE OF ABRAHAM

Now that we have traced the history of the man, what can we say in the way of a summary appreciation of his character? It is difficult to judge him fairly, for it is almost impossible for us to orient ourselves in the world of his day. He lived when only the faint gray streaks across the eastern sky foretold the dawn of the day of revelation, while we live in the full light of the noontide of God's revelation. Before we grade him down in character, let us answer this question: Are we as far ahead of Abraham in personal faith and obedience as Christian civilization is ahead of that of his day?

At least four outstanding characteristics of Abraham are manifest from our study:

1. He pursued the promises of God. He was the first great traveler mentioned in the Bible, but he was not a tourist on pleasure or sight-seeing bent; he was urged on by the conviction that it was the will of God, and that God had a purpose in it that meant good for many people. God promised to give him a land and a great people, and he followed the gleam of that promise.

2. He was a man of great faith, and became the father of the faithful (Gal. 3: 29). He did not live to see the promise of God fulfilled in material possessions, for when he died he did not own a foot of ground except the cave that he had bought for a burial place, but he had faith in God that was accounted unto him for righteousness, and having that he possessed the spiritual fulfillment of every promise. Every true believer would rather be a man of strong faith than a man of great material wealth.

3. He was devout in prayer. His whole life was pitched on the plane of prayer. It was through prayer

that he was called. It was through prayer that he was guided and sustained. It was through prayer that he interceded for Lot. And it was through prayer that the promises of God were given to him and kept before his mind.

4. He was a friend of God (See Isa. 41: 8; 2 Chron. 20: 7; and James 2: 23). He walked and talked with God.

QUESTIONS

Whose descendant was Abram?

What do we know about Ur?

What was God's ultimate purpose in calling Abram?

Why was Abram chosen rather than some one else?

How was he called?

Where was he told to go?

Why was he blessed?

What did he do first when he set up his camp?

What were his first two stops?

What did he do in Egypt? Why? What did Pharaoh do?

In what condition did he leave Egypt? Why was that permitted?

Where did he go then?

How long had Lot been with Abram?

Why did they separate? Describe the separation.

From what trouble did Abram deliver Lot? Tell of Abram's meeting with Melchizedek.

Who was Ishmael's mother? Why did Abram take her as a wife? Was that right?

Why was Abram's name changed to Abraham?

What was the meaning of the covenant?

What is the meaning of Sarah's name?

Tell of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

What is the last scene in Lot's life?

Why did Sarah name her son Isaac?

Why did Hagar leave Abraham's tent?

Why was Abraham called upon to sacrifice Isaac? Describe the incident.

Give an appreciation of Abraham's character.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER II

Genesis 11: 27 to 22: 24

ABRAM A SEMITE—11: 27-32

His place in the plan of redemption

Civilization of his day in Ur

BLESSED TO BLESS—12: 1-3

Ready when God called

Called to follow God's leading

To be blessed in order that he might become a blessing

BECOMES A DECEIVER—12: 4 to 13: 4

Habit of worship

Shechem and Bethel

Sin in Egypt

Becomes prosperous

BREAKS WITH LOT—13: 5 to 16: 16

Peril of riches

Friction in the family

Abram's unselfishness and Lot's selfishness

Rescues Lot and meets Melchizedek

Birth of Ishmael

BEGINNING OF THE COVENANT—17: 1-14

Abram becomes Abraham

Covenant established

Rite of circumcision

BIRTH OF ISAAC—17: 15 to 22: 24

Sarai becomes Sarah

Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Isaac born and named

Abraham's faith tested, Isaac presented to God

ESTIMATE OF ABRAHAM

CHAPTER III

ISAAC

I. THE DEATH OF SARAH

At the full age of one hundred and twenty-seven years Sarah died. She is the only woman whose age is given in the Bible. There is not much said about her in the accounts that we have been studying; her character is delineated in the background of the portrait of her famous husband, as has been true of so many women since. She was a faithful wife according to the standards of her day, carrying her loyalty to her husband to the extreme of slavish obedience, and counting her home her kingdom. Indeed, she left an example of loyal devotion to her home that has influenced Hebrew women throughout history.

She was too pretty for Abraham's comfort of mind at times, and she carried her beauty and charm to a ripe old age. Her good looks were responsible in part for Abraham's greatest sins, for he was so afraid that other men would be attracted by her charming appearance and would kill him to get her, that he lied about her twice, saying that she was not his wife but his sister. And she was so faithful to him that she agreed to the falsehood. Her treatment of Hagar showed her temper and jealousy, but over every incident her loyalty to her husband and her home dominated her emotions and formed her decisions. When she suggested that Abraham take Hagar as a secondary wife she was lacking in faith in God, but she was conscientious in accordance with the customs of her day.

As the mother of Isaac and a good mother in her home she became the mother of the faithful (1 Peter 3: 6), as

Abraham is regarded as the father of the faithful. That her husband and her son loved her devotedly in her life and grieved for her deeply in her death is made clear in the Genesis account.

II. BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE OF ISAAC

After Sarah's death Abraham became concerned for Isaac, in whom the promises of God were to be carried forward toward realization. It would never do, he thought, to have him marry a Canaanite; a wife from his own cousins must be found, that the worship of Jehovah might not be endangered. Indeed, it would not be enough merely to procure one of his cousins for his wife, but special care must be exercised that a worthy successor of Sarah be found. The responsibility of being a channel of blessing to all the peoples of the earth was to descend from Abraham to Isaac as a precious birthright, and in this high calling his wife must share. She should possess all the high qualities and virtues indispensable for the fulfilment of that mission, for her position in the home as the mother of the children of promise was to be an important factor in the development of God's plans.

Here we have the first love story given in the Bible, and it is adorned with all the charm of ancient oriental custom. The father takes the lead in seeking a wife for his son, and Isaac is the dutiful and obedient type that quietly acquiesces in his father's desires. Two things the aged patriarch does to insure success: one is to entrust the task to a tried and faithful servant and friend; and the other is to pray for divine guidance, and trust to God to bring the matter out according to his will. Abraham is content to rest his most cherished hope on those two scores. He is confident that Jehovah who called him from his native land with the promise of a great heritage, and who has given him his son in his old age, will send his angel before the servant to indicate the young woman who has been favored with God's choice.

This old servant sets a fine example of faithfulness in line of duty. He prepares for the journey and starts out with an undaunted faith that clearly marks him as a member of Abraham's household. Through the many years that he has traveled with his master he has learned to trust his God, and now he undertakes this mission with very much the same resignation to divine guidance that Abraham exhibited when he left his native land and kindred for a land that was strange to him. As he travels his thoughts are not of himself, but of his master, and of the important task that has been committed to him. As he approaches the city where the relatives live he pauses to pray for special guidance. He was a wise man, as well as deeply religious, and he exhibits both characteristics in this prayer at the crisis of his undertaking. What would you have done in a similar circumstance? Would you have sought the help of friendly people in the vicinity who would know the family of Abraham's brother, or would you have asked for some miraculous sign? He accepted the common situation that he was about to face, and simply asked that God would send the right woman to that place and that he might have sense enough to know her when she came along.

His prayer being answered almost immediately, he insists upon carrying his mission through to completion as soon as possible. He refuses to eat until he has told his errand, and asked for Rebekah to be the wife of his master's son. And what an eloquent appeal he makes! He tells of his prayer and how God answered it by bringing Rebekah down to the well and letting him know that she was the one, and he rests the case on the confident assurance that God will bring about the desired result. No finer example of simple faith, and implicit reliance upon divine guidance through prayer, is to be found in all the Old Testament.

Too often we are prone to look with condescension upon one who is called a servant. We should remember that in the full sense he is a servant who ministers for an-

other. This servant, who was in all probability the Eliezer of the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, was born in Abraham's household, and for many years had been given the responsibility of ruling over all of the other servants and all of Abraham's property. In fact, if Abraham had not had a son he would have inherited the estate (Gen. 15: 2, 3). Surely this servant was a noble man, worthy of all the trust that Abraham reposed in him!

No doubt this is the first word that Nahor and his family have heard directly from their kinsman who left them on strange wanderings more than sixty-five years before. It is good to hear that he has been successful, has become wealthy, and has settled down and established a home—one can readily imagine that they had often talked about him and said something to the effect that a rolling stone gathers no moss, or that a wanderer seldom builds a fortune. Laban notices the ring that Eliezer has put in Rebekah's nose and the bracelets that he has put on her arms, and even as he is estimating their value his uncle's servant brings forth other costly presents, jewels of gold and silver and fine garments, gifts for every member of the family. They are impressed. Certainly Abraham knew his relatives when he started his servant forth on that trip! He was not to ask a favor but to bestow one when he asked for one of their daughters to become the bride of his son, and that is the impression that they got.

Rebekah is glad to go and become the wife of her cousin (she was Isaac's first cousin once removed), and her father and brother give their consent; so after a short delay she and her maidservants start out with Eliezer on the return journey.

In the cool of the eventide Isaac went out into the field to meditate—he probably had been praying every day that God might bless the servant and let him bring back a good and sensible cousin to be his wife—and as he lifted his eyes from his prayer he saw a camel train coming toward his home. Recognizing the servant he went

forward to meet him and to see his bride for the first time. But he was not to see her face until he had heard the full story of the providences of God that had made the journey successful. Rebekah lowered her veil and the servant recounted the events of the trip. Then Isaac brought her into his mother's tent, "and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." Was there ever a betrothal and marriage more completely consummated through faith and prayer? The circumstances vary, but the principle should always be the same for those who have faith in God. Surely the important matter of finding a companion for life should be undertaken only through prayer for God's guidance!

III. ISHMAEL AND ISAAC AT ABRAHAM'S FUNERAL

Some time after Sarah's death Abraham took another wife, Keturah, who was probably a Canaanite, and she bore him six sons; but they were never given the same rating in the family that Isaac enjoyed. One after another Abraham sent them away to establish their homes elsewhere, laden with gifts, but they were not sharers with the son of promise in the family heritage. Isaac was to be the sole heir of all that Abraham possessed.

When Abraham died it had been many years since Ishmael and Hagar had been sent away to wander in the wilderness. It seems now that it must have been necessary for the preservation of God's blessings and promise through Isaac, but it must have been hard for Ishmael to understand. It may be that the Bible does not give us a full account of the circumstances over the years. It would be expecting too much to ask that all the details be given, and some of those omitted items might throw some interesting light on the occasion for sending Ishmael and Hagar away, if we knew them. We do not know all of those circumstances, but the funeral of the father of the faithful gives us a beautiful

picture of the family that had passed through so many trying experiences.

Ishmael the wanderer came back to assist Isaac the meditative son of the covenant in the funeral of their father. There was no tie drawing him back when Sarah died, but Abraham was his father and evidently he loved him despite the fact that he had refused to make him a full heir. We have no other record of these two sons coming together in a family meeting. "Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac," but Ishmael came back for the funeral. It often occurs that families that have been divided are brought together around a parent's grave. Perhaps the most helpful lesson that we get from Ishmael's life is his willingness to lay aside the grievances of the past and come back to do honor to his noble father. Many another would not have looked above his grievances to recognize the greatness of a loved one, but evidently Ishmael was big enough in character to do that. The two half-brothers meet here and then part probably never to meet again.

IV. BIRTH OF ESAU AND JACOB

While the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah was happy, they were nevertheless grieved because they had no children. For twenty years this condition continued, and often they must have been reminded of Sarah's long barrenness. But it was through prayer that they were united in wedlock, and so now they resorted to prayer with their disappointment. Isaac entreated Jehovah, and his prayer was heard and answered; and Rebekah prayed that she might be guided and sustained. Believing parents today know what it is to walk with God through the valley where children are born, but they walk with the confidence that the loving Father who made them his children will give them their children in health and in happiness. The God of Isaac and Rebekah is the God of every devoted couple today.

Twins were born to Rebekah, but according to oriental

custom the first-born was as much the chief heir as if there were years between them. Esau was born first, and he was ruddy and hairy and that suggested the name. Jacob grasped his brother's heel, and was given the name that means one who supplants, or one who takes by the heel. These characteristics of the babies were to go with the men throughout life.

Esau became a skilful hunter, roving the fields and delighting in stalking his prey. He frequently came in from a hunt with a fresh kill in the bag, which he would dress carefully and cook over an open fire for his father. It was quite natural that there should develop a tender affection between Isaac and Esau. Was he not his first-born, and would he not inherit the bulk of the family estate? And did he not excel in the very thing that Isaac had always admired but had been too timid to follow boldly?

V. A DECEIVER'S SON

Very little is told in the Bible of the life and work of Isaac. He was a quiet home-loving man, devoted to his wife, remaining in the country around Hebron practically all of his life, and following the line of least resistance in most things. In one way it was commendable in him that he was willing to trust his father's servant to go on a long trip to select a wife for him, while he remained at home and prayed, but it was also an indication of lack of initiative. A more vigorous and independent man of forty would have prayed for guidance and then would have gone on the trip himself to look for that wife. Evidently Abraham recognized this fundamental weakness in Isaac, and hence sent the servant instead of his son.

Isaac quite naturally slips into the background when we are studying this part of the Bible, while stronger characters like Abraham, Rebekah, and Jacob grip our attention. He was not a trail-blazer, like his pioneer father; but he inherited from him his love for worship

and prayer, or perhaps it would be truer to say that it was instilled in him during his early years by his devout mother and father. He seems also to have inherited his father's weakness for deceiving people. He fell into exactly the same sin that is twice charged to Abraham. Because of a famine he moved to Gerar, having received a revelation from God that it would be better to go there than to move down to Egypt. When the men there asked him about Rebekah he said that she was his sister, for he was afraid that they might kill him to get her. He was a deceiver's son, but with less ground to justify him in his falsehood, for Rebekah was only his cousin, while Sarah was actually Abraham's half-sister. But each of them lied in that he did not say that the woman in question was actually his wife, and that was the important point. Do we censure Abraham and Isaac for resorting to falsehood in time of danger? Of course we do, and yet do we not often tell what we like to call "white lies" without as much truth to support us and certainly without so grave a danger threatening us?

The point to be noticed about all three of these instances of deception about Sarah and Rebekah is that God did not approve, but manifested his disapproval so positively that the deception was discovered, and then allowed Abraham and Isaac to prosper in safety and security, as if to rebuke them for their folly in thinking that there could be any protection greater than Jehovah could provide. Falsehood and deception never pay in the business of building a life, or constructing a character.

In spite of his moral weakness, and because of God's purpose through him and his descendants, Isaac was allowed to prosper in multiplying his herds and flocks, and in gathering an abundant harvest from his planting, and in digging wells that his animals might have water. It was in the digging of those wells that he once more exhibited the characteristics of his great father, and showed the effects of early home training, and left an

example that we may well emulate today. Enemies had stopped up the wells that Abraham had dug, and now Isaac quietly went about the task of renewing them, but more trouble arose. Then he moved on and dug a new one, and when it was flowing freely hostile herdsmen fought with his herdsmen for control of it. He might have organized his servants into an army and fought for that which was his according to the recognized desert law that a well belongs to the one who digs it. But, as Abraham did with Lot, he yielded the point and moved on to find another. Again he was successful in finding water, and again there was strife. One would think that surely he would fight back this time, but once more he remembered the example of his father and how God richly blessed him after he gave Lot his choice of land. Perhaps he also counted the cost. What if he should win the battle and lose half of his valuable servants? He could dig other wells, and Jehovah would guide him in the future as he had done in the past. It may be that it was not God's will that he should settle there. He had lived by prayer and not by fighting in the past, and he had been blessed. He would try that path yet again. This time he dug the well at Rehoboth, and then a little later the one at Beer-sheba, where he made a covenant with Abimelech and dwelt in peace and prosperity.

VI. ESTIMATE OF ISAAC

What can be said that will sum up the character study of Isaac? At least three things:

1. He was like Abraham in prayer and worship. Five times it is said of Abraham that he built an altar, and once that act is attributed to Isaac. But many times it is said of the son that he prayed, or that God spoke to him and revealed his will to him. We are not surprised at that, for he grew up in a devout religious environment. Was he not at one time actually put on the altar as a gift to Jehovah? That must have made a lasting impression on him, to make him remember always that he

belonged to God. That same father, together with the mother who was ever grateful to God for the gift of a son, frequently led the boy to the altar where the family worshipped. When he became a man the habit was fixed, and he prayed over every problem.

2. His chief weakness was his tendency to follow the line of least resistance. He was content to send a servant to choose a wife for him, although he was forty years old and should have been quite capable of doing that for himself. He lied about Rebekah when he should have had the courage to tell the truth and trust the Lord to take care of him. In this he was like his father, but he was not like his father in forging ahead and doing things for himself. Abraham sent for a wife for Isaac, but Isaac never did as much for Esau and Jacob. Esau married a Canaanite woman, and Jacob might have done the same if it had not been for the intervention of Rebekah.

3. We must remember Isaac as a peace-loving man. He gained by avoiding war and seeking peace by way of compromise. It is well to remember that

“Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins”
(Prov. 10: 12).

Isaac's descendants have learned over and over again what it is to be driven from places of prosperity to establish new homes. Often they have moved under bitter persecution at the hands of those who have envied the Jews their prosperity. But the story repeats itself: when driven from one country they would go to another and there the Lord would allow them to prosper. Let us look from the peace-loving Isaac across the centuries to the Prince of Peace and covenant with him that we shall live at peace with all men by putting our full trust in God.

QUESTIONS

How old was Sarah when she died?
 Tell what you know of her life and character.
 In what sense was she the mother of the faithful?
 Why was Abraham concerned about Isaac's marriage?
 How did he go about getting a wife for his son?
 What did Eliezer do when he came to the land of Nahor?
 What did he do to make a favorable impression upon Abraham's relatives?
 Give an appreciation of Eliezer.
 What was Isaac doing when Eliezer returned with Rebekah?
 Tell of Ishmael's return for Abraham's funeral.
 How long were Isaac and Rebekah married before children came into the home?
 In what way did they express their anxiety?
 What was God's answer to Rebekah's prayer?
 Why did Isaac favor Esau?
 Why did Rebekah favor Jacob?
 What bad example from Abraham did Isaac follow?
 What was Isaac's experience in digging wells?
 Give a character sketch of Isaac.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER III

Genesis 23: 1 to 25: 28; 26

DEATH OF SARAH—23

Beautiful woman, faithful wife, mother of the faithful

BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE OF ISAAC—24

Abraham's concern for Isaac's marriage

Eliezer sent to find a bride for Isaac

Oriental love story

Appreciation of Eliezer

Rebekah consents

ISHMAEL AND ISAAC AT ABRAHAM'S FUNERAL—25: 1-18

Abraham and Keturah

Abraham's death

Ishmael comes back

BIRTH OF ESAU AND JACOB—25: 19-28

Twins born in answer to prayer

Isaac favors Esau; Rebekah favors Jacob

A DECEIVER'S SON—26

Isaac follows his father's example in telling a lie about his wife

God's disapproval manifested

Isaac digs wells peacefully

ESTIMATE OF ISAAC

CHAPTER IV

JACOB THE DECEIVER

I. EARLY YEARS AT HOME

The relations between the twin brothers should have been intimate and loving. That is the normal story of twins, for they have so much in common, often look very much alike, and usually have similar tastes. But these boys were born struggling together, and that was an omen of the contention of later years. From the very first they seemed to be inclined in opposite directions. Esau became a hunter, a man of the fields, living a rough and rugged life, taking things very much as they came. He was never happier than when in the chase after wild game, when he would go as fast and as long as his strength would carry him, utterly unmindful of precaution or of provision for the time when he would be exhausted and hungry after the hunt had ended. Then when hunger gripped him he would throw away his future for food with which to satisfy his appetite, as quickly as he would risk his life upon the uncertain chances of the chase. He was reckless, impulsive, vengeful, sensuous, and crude. He showed no inclination to rise above material things and cherish spiritual values. He was unconcerned over the spiritual significance of his birthright. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob built altars of worship, but Esau never did.

Jacob early showed a quieter and more even temperament. He delighted to remain near home, or to stay by the flocks in the field not far away. He was the steady, reliable shepherd. As he had time at home to listen to his mother's dreams of the future, when the promises of God to Abraham and Isaac would be brought

to a larger fulfilment, so he had time with the flocks in the field to make those dreams his own in quiet meditation. He learned to control his appetites and passions, and to cultivate patience in working toward the realization of his ambitions. But he also cultivated cunning and deceit, and practiced them with cruel disregard of the welfare of his brother, or others who might be involved. He was ready to take advantage of his brother's weakness in time of need and turn it to his own profit. It may be that his mother had often told him that before he and Esau were born God indicated to her that he should have the birthright, but that his father had determined that his brother should have it, and so he may have felt that he was fighting with his mother on the side of God against Isaac. But such thoughts never justify resort to the base methods and schemes that Jacob employed. It would have been more in keeping with true religion if he and his mother had waited for the providence of God to accomplish his will in the matter. It is another instance of the principle that the end does not justify the means.

When Esau came in from a fruitless hunting expedition, hungry and about to faint from weariness, Jacob was boiling some pottage that gave forth a savory odor. No doubt he had planned the whole thing, having watched his brother often as he came in from his strenuous trips. Some distance from home he planted himself in the field with an abundant supply of well-chosen food, and when he saw Esau coming across the field with no game he stirred up the fire and threw in some more vegetables and waited for hunger, his ally, to present his opportunity. Esau weakened and fell a victim to Jacob's shrewd scheming, and sold him his birthright. Jacob secretly exulted as he saw his brother ravenously devouring the food, but "Esau despised his birthright." He probably despised the restraints that it would place upon him, and now that his stomach was full he thought that he could take care of himself with his skill as a hunter.

After all, he thought, he was not the type for prayer, and revelation, and divine promises.

II. DECEIVES HIS FATHER AND LEAVES HOME

It was customary among the patriarchs in ancient times for a man to bestow his blessing upon his children just before he died, and it was understood that the blessing pronounced was a promise and a prophecy of prosperity and spiritual welfare. The father approaching death was thought to be in intimate communion with God, and so his blessing was accepted as carrying divine favor. There was little difference between such blessing and the birth-right, for the former confirmed the latter and was in agreement with it. The first-born who received the birth-right, and therefore the major portion of the inheritance, also received the choice blessing from the father. It was customary for the father, when he felt death approaching, to call his sons around him and bestow his blessings upon them.

Just as Jacob had watched his chance to cheat his brother out of his birthright, so now he and Rebekah were watchfully awaiting their opportunity to deceive Isaac into giving the favorite blessing to him instead of Esau. When Isaac felt himself growing weaker, and decided to proceed with the formality of bestowing his blessing, he called Esau and asked him to prepare a meal for him of his choice wild meat, so that he might enjoy the food and then give him his blessing. Rebekah was listening and as soon as Esau was out of sight she plotted with Jacob how he might deceive his father and cheat his brother. He was basely selfish when he took advantage of Esau to get the promise of the birthright from him; and now he was heartless indeed in taking advantage of his aged father, who was blind and helpless. Of course, his mother took the lead this time, but she was doing it for him in unselfish devotion, while he was doing it for himself in unholy ambition. While his brother was away honestly seeking to please his father, the supplanter

was at home working feverishly to cheat him out of his blessing before he returned to defend himself. There is nothing attractive about Jacob here. Indeed, we are disposed to despise him, and wonder why Jehovah accepted such a trickster. But great sin calls for great repentance, which is always matched by sufficient grace for full forgiveness. God did not reject him here because there was slumbering deep in his heart a spirit that would yet break loose and seek God as vigorously as this other spirit was now following the path of sin. God had to wait a long time for Jacob to find the right attitude of life toward him, but he often has to wait a long time for his servants to seek honestly to do his full will.

The foul scheme was brought to its desired success, and Jacob received the full blessing. Scarcely had he left the tent when Esau came in with his game. He carefully prepared a delicious dish and took it to his father with high hopes beating in his heart, for this was his great day. He would inherit the family fortune and enter into the management of his father's affairs. The world seemed glorious in his thoughts; it was as if he stood on some high mountain peak with the full glory of the rising sun in his face, while all the earth beneath him was bathed in light and tinted with rich color. Then he spoke to his father and waited. But the words that came were a crash of thunder and burning lightning to all his dreams. Nothing seemed left to him but dust and ashes. From the valley of despair he cried out, "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?" The heartbroken father can only wail in anguished reply: "Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with grain and new wine have I sustained him: and what then shall I do for thee, my son?" The very blessing that he had confidently expected to receive had gone to his despised brother. Then while sobs of anguish wrenched his mighty frame he cried out pathetically: "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father."

It is not surprising that Esau hated Jacob with a vengeance now, and began to plot his death. But Rebekah, ever alert, discovered the death plot and matched it with another scheme to outwit him and save her beloved son. She persuaded Isaac to send Jacob away into Mesopotamia to find a wife among the daughters of her brother, that he might not marry among the heathen women of that land, as Esau had done. Isaac fell in with the plan, and sent him away with a renewal of the blessing that he had passed on to him from Abraham.

III. REBEKAH

As this is our last glimpse of the mother of the contentious twins, it is a good time to look back over her life and sum up what we learn about her from the account given. These are not single portraits that the writer of Genesis has given us, but family groups. We do not look at the mother without seeing the husband and sons close about her in almost every verse. But it is worth while to single out those features that make her character what it is and put her picture off to itself, so that we may learn some lessons from her life.

First of all, she was courteous and kind. It seemed quite natural for her to treat Eliezer as she did the first time she saw him. She gladly drew water for him and for his animals—no small undertaking, as camels are noted for their large capacity for water after a desert trip—and she did it with a kindly spirit and genteel manner that must have been a part of her very nature.

She was also quick to size up a situation and sense an opportunity. She recognized in Eliezer a man of some importance before he had revealed his mission. There were many things to indicate his station: the number and character of his camels, his retinue of subordinate servants, his dress, the ring and bracelets that he displayed rather casually, as well as his garments and headdress. All of this she took in with a glance, her womanly intuition telling her more than she had time to reason out.

When they were talking a little later in the family circle, and the proposal was passed on to her for decision, she decided at once that she could do no better than accept this offer of marriage. She would move into a family of good station in life, of wealth, and true religion. This same quality of sensing and seizing an opportunity went with her through life, as exhibited in her guidance of Jacob to secure the birthright.

A third characteristic was her willingness to serve and sacrifice herself for larger interests. When Isaac lied about her, saying that she was his sister instead of his wife, she agreed to the falsehood, although she well knew the danger to herself. She might be taken as a subordinate wife into another man's harem, but she did not hesitate, for she was considering her husband's safety and welfare. When she helped Jacob in his scheming against Esau and Isaac she knew well that she would have to bear the brunt of the blame, for she would have to remain in the tent with Isaac and near Esau, while it would always be possible for Jacob to run away, but she did not hesitate.

Rebekah was evidently very religious, but of a different type from Isaac. She prayed for strength and guidance, and then bestirred herself to bring to pass that which she felt was in accordance with God's plan. She was too ready to rely upon scheming and manipulation and connivance, but she did it with a certain amount of religious conviction. Before we criticize her too severely let us ask ourselves whether we have advanced very far beyond her.

We do well to close the character study of Rebekah by thinking of her as a devoted mother. Before her children were born she prayed for them, and through the remainder of her life she mothered them. She favored Jacob, as her husband favored the other boy, and she stooped at times to methods that she should have condemned, but she was always conscientious as a mother. Conscience is not enough, for we must always seek the

guidance of the Spirit of God for our consciences; but we must not fail to contrast the customs of her day with the Christian civilization of our day.

The unpainted scene in Rebekah's life would picture her in her old age waiting through long and lonely days for Jacob's return. When she sent him away she thought it would be for only a few days. He could accomplish the journey and get a wife in about the same period of time it took Eliezer to get her and bring her back to Isaac, and Esau was the type to cool his temper soon in the zest of a good hunt, and there would be other ways of appeasing him, and so the danger to Jacob would be removed. She waited until the months lengthened into years, the hope in her heart grew faint and her vision became dim as she sat in her tent door and gazed in the direction of her childhood home, but her beloved son did not return. She was called upon to suffer more than she had anticipated, but that is usually the recompense of deception. She died without the comfort of her favorite son's affectionate embrace.

IV. FIRST VISIT TO BETHEL

Rebekah and Jacob, a crafty team in scheming, were now separated, and for the first time in his life he faced the world without her shrewd counsel and comforting presence. He traveled about forty miles the first day, and every mile must have added to his burden of suffering and loneliness. True, he had Esau's birthright and his father's blessing, but they were of little comfort to him now. He was leaving his boyhood home where he had always been protected by his resourceful mother, and was facing he knew not what. He may well have thought that he had sacrificed everything to selfish ambition, but whether he regretted it or not he could not turn back. He must swallow that lump in his throat and press on.

At eventide he came to Bethel, his grandfather's shrine. Thoughts of that great man of God now flooded his mind. There is a Jewish tradition that Abraham lived some

years after the birth of the twins, and that Jacob was his favorite, as he was Rebekah's, and that the quiet lad and the aged grandfather spent much time together talking over Abraham's earlier years and God's wonderful guidance in his life, and the projection of that same guidance through the coming generations of his descendants. Although the Bible account of the death of Abraham comes before the account of the birth of Jacob, a little figuring reveals that he lived through the first fifteen years of his grandson's life. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born, and Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born, which means that Abraham was 160 years old at that time, and 175 when he died. Thus Jacob was 15 years old when Abraham died. Many times when Esau was out hunting, Jacob was at home talking with his grandfather, unconsciously allowing him to mold his thinking and shape his ideals.

These memories haunted him now as he came into the region of Bethel. Abraham erected an altar here, but how different everything was with him! He was traveling with his beloved Sarah and Lot, under Jehovah's guidance and with divine blessing, while Jacob was fleeing alone. The full meaning of his sin dawned upon him, as he compared his life with that of his grandfather, whose memory he revered; and as the shades of night began to fall around him in this strange place, he began to be afraid. He must have thought of Cain, driven away from home because of his sin against his brother and forced to wander in the earth until death released him. He was like Cain, wandering from home and forsaken by God, and not like Abraham. Sin is ever thus; it mars the beauty of home life and destroys the blessing of fellowship with God.

With a stone for his pillow, he sought rest. Lonely and tired, heavy of heart, wishing that by some mystic power he might turn time back a few days and right his wrongs, he fell into a fitful sleep. A dream came to him, in which he saw a ladder connecting heaven and

earth, with angels ascending and descending on it. Then the voice of God came to him, the God of Abraham and Isaac, the God of the family promise, confirming that promise in him. Jehovah assured him that he would go with him and keep him, and bring him back to his home land which he would give to him for a possession, and that he would make his family great.

He awoke, but the dream remained with him. He realized that he was in the presence of God, and he called the place Bethel, which means the house of God. He came there with a tremendous burden of sin, but he was to go away with the consciousness of being forgiven. And Bethel is to remain a symbol of the place where sinful man may meet Holy God and receive cleansing grace, for "where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." He uttered an eternal truth when he said, "Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not." God is in every place, but sin blinds us to his presence. He was present in Isaac's home back there in Beersheba, but Jacob was not in the proper frame of mind to recognize him.

Then Jacob sought to enter into a compact with God. He made a vow that if God would go with him and keep him, give him food and clothes, and bring him in peace to his father's house again, then he would always recognize this place as God's house, and would give back to God a tenth of all that God should give to him. It is a bargain and so not a very high spiritual elevation for a true worshiper, but it is a lofty pinnacle for Jacob, considering the low level of sin on which he had been living. One does not rebound immediately from sin to the highest spiritual achievement, for that requires growth in grace.

V. WORKS FOR LABAN

Now Jacob was started in the right direction spiritually. He would slip again into sin, but this Bethel experience

would be a staying power in his heart. He traveled like Abraham now, guided by divine wisdom with a definite purpose before him, and no longer like Cain, wandering aimlessly because of his sin. He went with the assurance that God had forgiven what had happened in the past, and would guide and bless him in the future. There were many days yet ahead of him in his journey, but all of them put together were not as long as that first day that he traveled from Beer-sheba to Bethel with only his sins for company. He traveled now with the conviction that there was a purpose of eternal significance to be accomplished in his life. God always has a plan and purpose in his service for the one whose sins he forgives.

He soon came to Haran. At a well he found some shepherds waiting with their flocks until the time for the stone to be rolled away and the sheep watered. It is not uncommon in that country, where water is scarce, to have a great stone before a well to protect it from strangers and marauders and sand storms.

With a light heart Jacob greeted them as brethren and inquired of them concerning his uncle Laban. Even as he was talking with them Rachel, a pretty daughter of Laban and therefore Jacob's first cousin, came with her father's sheep which she was tending. At first sight of her his heart leaped within him for joy; he loved her, and immediately determined that by the help of the Lord he would get her for his wife. With the strength of a new man, his own power seemingly doubled by the consciousness of God's favor and by the thrill of the beauty of this prospective bride, unassisted he rolled away the stone that ordinarily required the work of several men. Then having watered the sheep he turned to Rachel and kissed her and wept for joy. In the Orient a man may weep when he is extremely happy without being called effeminate.

Learning that he was Rebekah's son, Rachel took him at once to Laban, and there was great rejoicing as they welcomed him. But soon the enthusiastic greetings sub-

sided and the family settled down to the established routine, with Jacob easily taking a place in the round of work. There was some difference between his visit to the East to get a wife, and the errand of the servant Eliezer to get Rebekah. Jacob displayed no costly gifts, and was in no hurry to state the purpose of his visit. In fact, it seemed that he came simply to get a job, and he worked for a month without saying anything about wages. Finally Laban asked him to make an agreement with him as to the wages that he would expect, whereupon Jacob announced that he would work for him for seven years if at the end of that time he would let him have Rachel for his wife. Daughters were regarded as the property of their fathers and were purchased as wives with money or with labor. Eliezer had paid money and jewels and clothes for Rebekah, but Jacob had none of these with him, and did not impress his relatives with his wealthy station at home; hence, he could hope to win Rachel only by service. The customary period of service for a wife was five to seven years. He showed his estimate of his cousin by offering to work for her the longer period.

Happy in his love for Rachel, and ever cherishing the realization of his Bethel dream as the aim of his life, Jacob worked, and the years flew by as so many days. When he claimed his bride Laban deceived him and gave him Leah, the older daughter, instead of Rachel. In the marriage ceremony he called Rachel and Leah answered, deceiving him, very much as Jacob had deceived Isaac into thinking that he was Esau. Thus did his practice of deception come back upon him like a boomerang.

Laban explained to him that it was not customary to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older. The marriage ceremonies usually lasted a week, and so he told his nephew that he should go ahead with the festivities of the week, and then he would give him Rachel the next week, and in return for her he should work for him another period of seven years. Jacob agreed and got two wives and their handmaids within the course

of two weeks, and then began his second seven-year term of service.

When the fourteen years had passed Laban sought to make a new contract with Jacob, for he saw that he had prospered by having him. Jacob recognized his opportunity to gather something for himself, and the old deceiving nature re-asserted itself. He had dealt honestly with his uncle these fourteen years, and had been deceived at almost every turn. He reasoned that he knew a trick or two himself, and could use them to advantage. So for six years longer he worked, employing all the cunning and trickery that he knew to add to the flocks that would be his according to the contract. It was a case of cheat cheating cheat, and it was all in the game called business. Jacob evidently forgot Bethel for the time, and set aside his earlier repentance for his sin against Esau and Isaac, and devoted himself fully to accumulating wealth at the expense of his uncle. Ever since his day there have been those who have said that business is simply a matter of murderous competition in which the man who prospers is the man who is the quickest to take advantage of others in a deal. There is much in the business world that is regarded as legal but cannot be considered right, judged by an adequate standard of ethics. The way Jacob treated Laban was legal, but it was morally wrong.

QUESTIONS

- What were the relations between the twin brothers at home?
In what ways did Jacob and Esau differ? Sketch the character of each.
Tell how Jacob got Esau's birthright.
How did Esau then feel about his birthright?
Tell how Jacob cheated Esau out of Isaac's blessing.
How did the experience affect Esau?
Why did Jacob leave home? Whose suggestion was it?
Describe the conditions in the home during these experiences.

Tell what you know of Rebekah.
 Distinguish between Rebekah and Isaac religiously.
 Did she live until Jacob's return?
 Describe Jacob's first visit to Bethel.
 How old was Jacob when Abraham died? In what way do you think Abraham influenced Jacob?
 What was the message of the dream that came to Jacob at Bethel?
 What did he say when he awoke?
 What bargain did he make with God?
 Describe the meeting between Jacob and Rachel.
 How was Jacob received at Laban's home? What was the difference between the visit of Eliezer and that of Jacob?
 Describe Jacob's experience after seven years of service.
 What wages did Jacob receive during the last six years that he worked for Laban?

OUTLINE

CHAPTER IV

Genesis 25: 29-34; 27 to 30

EARLY YEARS AT HOME—25: 29-34

Unhappy relations at home
 Marked difference between the twins
 Esau sells his birthright

DECEIVES HIS FATHER AND LEAVES HOME—27: 1 to 28: 9

Jacob and Rebekah cheat Esau out of Isaac's blessing
 Esau plots to kill Jacob
 Jacob sent away to get a wife

REBEKAH

Courteous and kind
 Quick of discernment
 Willing to sacrifice herself for larger interests
 Religious
 Devoted mother

FIRST VISIT TO BETHEL—28: 10-22

Travels first day to Bethel

Abraham's place of worship
In a dream Jehovah speaks to him
Compact with Jehovah

WORKS FOR LABAN—29 to 30

From Bethel to Haran
Serves Laban for Rachel
Deceived by Laban and given Leah
Receives Rachel and serves seven years for her
Prosperes through cunning and trickery

CHAPTER V

ISRAEL THE CHAMPION OF GOD, AND JOSEPH THE DREAMER

I. JACOB LEAVES LABAN

Jacob had forgotten the divine purpose in his life in the midst of his unseemly successes, but a condition arose that made him think once again of his home and birth-right. Laban's sons became jealous of their cousin, and Jacob knew that that meant real danger. So he began to make his plans to leave. He felt that he would have to gather his possessions together and seize an opportunity to slip away unobserved, or have a battle with his uncle. He enlisted the aid of his wives, for their father had violated custom and appropriated their dowery (see Gen. 31: 15; the custom was that when a man sold his daughter to a man to be his wife he gave the money, or a considerable portion of it, to the bride and it became her property, but Laban had kept it all for himself).

It was while he was being disturbed by the thoughts of possible conflict with his uncle that he once again listened to the voice of the God of Bethel. It is often true that in the midst of prosperity God's servants are not sensitive to his guidance, and so he permits temporary disturbances to come to shake them out of their easy content, to enable him to lead them out of something that they think is good to something that he knows is better. Jehovah renews his promise to Jacob and calls upon him to start back to Canaan, for it is there that the call of Abraham is to be worked out in him. As it was necessary for Abraham to leave this country when the call was initiated, so it was necessary for Jacob to leave it when the same call was to be sustained and carried forward.

He came into this country empty-handed, but he returned rich. Eleven sons and one daughter had been born to him in Padan-Aram, and he had two wives with their handmaids. He also had large flocks of sheep, goats, and many camels and donkeys, as well as many servants and slaves. All of these he gathered together secretly and stole away toward home. He did not want to fight his uncle and cousins, mainly because he was afraid and because he had a guilty conscience over his conduct during the past six years. He had been dishonest with his uncle and therefore he was afraid of him. It was God's will that he should leave this land, but not that he should sneak out like a coward. As a rebuke to him, and to show that honesty with man and confidence in God is always the wisest and the safest path to follow, Jehovah allowed Laban to overtake him. Then when Jacob's plan had failed and the danger that he had feared was about to come into dread reality, God intervened and kept Laban from harming him in any way. When the danger had evidently passed Jacob became bold and chided his uncle for the way he had treated him, but it was a misplaced boldness. If it had come before he started away it would have indicated strength of character, but here it indicated weakness.

With their difficulty settled they erected a stone memorial, ate a peace meal and formed a covenant with the Mizpah as the ritual: "Jehovah watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." Then they parted as kin in spirit as well as in blood.

II. MEETS ESAU AFTER PENIEL

Jacob had prayed at Bethel, twenty years before, that God would bring him back to his own people in peace, and now the prayer had been answered in his last encounter with Laban. God enabled him to leave in peace, and not in anger and fear as he had fled from his brother and father. But even as he thought of that the old fear of his brother came back upon him. How would

Esau receive him? He was capable of great anger and terrible vengeance, and Jacob did not regard him as of a forgiving disposition. Indeed, on his own account, Jacob had little reason to expect forgiveness. The more he thought of these things the more he became fearful. Once more he was trusting in himself rather than in Jehovah. Fear gripped him with double force when his messengers returned telling him that Esau was coming to meet him, riding with four hundred men as his bodyguard.

What would you have done in such a situation? Would you have prepared for battle, or would you have turned and fled to Laban for protection? There was no time to flee, with his family, for Esau was riding toward him and would easily overtake him as Laban had done. Jacob decided upon two lines of action: he would resort to his best skill and ingenuity in meeting his brother, and he would pray for divine counsel and help. And there he showed his wisdom. There had been times when he had appeared weak and unpromising, but as he grew older he grew stronger, for in critical times he hearkened to the voice of his God. And now in his greatest crisis he showed his best character.

Having divided his herds and servants into two groups, so that there might be some chance of saving half of them, and having sent generous gifts forward to his brother, he sent his wives and children across the Jabbok and remained alone to pray. Looking back over the past twenty years, he remembered his treachery and unfaithfulness, all of which he now confessed to God. Claiming no merit of his own, he rested his plea on the mercy of God, and the promise given at Bethel (32: 9-12). Can you improve on that approach to prayer? That was the essence of the prayer of the man about whom Jesus told, who went into the temple, his Bethel, and prayed: "God be merciful to me the sinner." Jesus said it was a victorious prayer.

All night long Jacob wrestled in prayer, determined to wait for Jehovah's blessing. What a struggle it

must have been! The cowardly, deceiving nature that had dominated him on so many occasions arose mightily within him. With all of his camp on the other side of the brook there was yet time for him to escape alone. Before Esau could discover his absence he would be able to get a good start, and on a fast camel he could make his getaway. True, he would have to sacrifice his wives and children, as well as his possessions, but that would be better than dying at Esau's hands. When such thoughts came to him an angel of Jehovah strove with him to enable him to master them. For a long time the two natures had struggled for mastery in him, and often his better self had been defeated in selfishness and cowardice. When he thought of fleeing from his brother and remembered that he was able to succeed after fleeing before, the angel reminded him that it was by the merciful intervention of God that adversity was turned into blessing. With every appearance of the old crafty, deceiving nature, Jehovah's angel struggled with him. He must gain the victory over himself now, once and for all. His struggle was typical, was it not? We remember that Paul said: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7: 18, 19, ASV).

In the quiet of the dawn the victory came, and Jacob called the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." His name was then changed from Jacob, the deceiver, to Israel, "for," said the angel, "thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed." The struggle of more than twenty years came to a glorious victory in this final climactic struggle, through an all-night prayer. Tired but triumphant, Jacob limped from his place of prayer to meet his brother, an old Jacob, but a new man. Come what may, all is well now, for he has settled the matter with his God.

Imagine his surprise when he saw Esau running forward, unarmed and with no show of fighting, but with outstretched arms in brotherly greeting, calling him by name in tender affection! The clouds of fear were swept aside in the light of forgiveness that shone in Esau's countenance. The love of God in Abraham and Isaac now welled up in the twins' hearts to melt the barriers that sin had built. They had been strangers and enemies, but now they were brothers.

III. SECOND VISIT TO BETHEL

Esau returned to Edom, where he had taken up his abode, and Jacob went on more slowly because of the children and the cattle, coming after awhile to Shechem, where he tarried for a time. The thirty-fourth chapter of Genesis gives us one of the darkest scenes of sin in all the Bible. The sons of Jacob, with their inherited tendency to deceive, attempt to right a grievous wrong with a greater wrong. If there is any one thing that these accounts teach us it is that two wrongs never make a right. The best way to meet sin is not with more sin, but with prayer and trust in God, to be followed by forgiveness.

So when the sin of the thirty-fourth chapter is the darkest, God calls upon Jacob to go to Bethel and tarry there in prayer and worship. He turns to his family and calls upon them to go with him. And when he speaks he is a prophet, for a prophet is one who speaks for God after God has spoken to him. At Bethel they put away their foreign gods, and repent, and seek forgiveness and guidance. It is a different Jacob who comes to Bethel this time. Before he was a coward running from his sin, but now he is the priest of his home and a prophet of God. Before he needed sorely to enter God's presence; now his family needs to have him at the altar and to take them with him. Often it is true that our loved ones and friends need to have us to go to God in prayer, and take them with us.

Just beyond Bethel, Rachel died in giving birth to Benjamin, her second son. How fortunate it was that Jacob had heeded God and had gone to Bethel, for he and Rachel were thus prepared for the separation that was soon to come! They had loved each other devotedly from their first meeting. Her death must have been a heavy blow to Jacob, but he was prepared for it now that he had been to Bethel, the house of God. Christian faith is often put to its severest test in the death of loved ones. If we are a long distance and a long time from our Bethel of prayer, faith will be weak, and the world has nothing to take its place; but if we are near our Bethel, we are ready for whatever may come, for God is with us and we are with him.

IV. OLD AGE

Through many trials and vicissitudes Jacob has passed, but at last he has come to a quiet old age. There is no sadder picture than that of a man who comes into the eventide of life confirmed in his sin. All of the sins of the early and vigorous years have become deep-rooted in him. In his reminiscences he lives over again much evil that he has done. But to a man like Jacob, who has triumphed over sin in his prime, and has learned to walk with God in confession and trust, the last years of earthly life are mellowed and sweetened. We are reminded of Browning's lines:

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith 'A whole I planned,

Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid.'"

Sitting in his tent and meditating upon his life, Jacob does not live with his sin, but with memories of God's goodness to him. His life now, however, is not merely a

round of meditation; it is in these years that he devotes himself to Joseph, his favorite son. The other sons, with the exception of Benjamin, grew up under his tutelage while he was deceiving Laban, and before Peniel and the second visit to Bethel. But by the time Joseph was old enough to delight in his father's company, Jacob had won the victory over his sinful nature at Peniel, and had taken his family to confession and prayer at Bethel. When he realized that his family needed to go with him to Bethel for spiritual cleansing he could not have dreamed what it would mean for the progress of God's purpose through the life of the little lad Joseph. If we wonder how his son was able to withstand the temptations of the court of Pharaoh, we must remember that he grew up under the wise and affectionate counsel of the Jacob of Peniel and Bethel. If no other result came from those years of Jacob's life but the training of Joseph they were tremendously worth while.

Here the center of our attention shifts a bit. Jacob begins to fade into the background of the picture, while Joseph comes forward, for it is in his life that the rest of the book of Genesis traces the development of God's purpose to bless the nations of the earth. Our attention is called to Jacob from time to time as we study Joseph, but only incidentally. In finishing our life sketch of the patriarch grandson of Abraham, two scenes should be mentioned. The first is the occasion when the tragic report of Joseph's disappearance was brought to him. His years were brightened and blessed with the companionship that he had with Rachel's first son. The love that he had for her, that was his first and greatest love, was somehow sanctified in his love for her two sons, and especially for Joseph. He was enjoying that, after his many unhappy experiences, as one enjoys the quiet beauty of the golden sunset after a storm. But it sometimes happens that the storm turns in its course and comes back to unleash its fury again, and with driving clouds and wind and rain to stretch a curtain of ominous

darkness over the face of the sun. It was even so with Jacob. It seemed that the storm of treachery had passed, and he and his family had settled down to enjoy the calm of the eventide of his life. But it came back upon him with a fury that was almost fatal to him. When his older sons deceived him and sold his favorite child into slavery, he was reaping a bitter harvest from his own sins of earlier days. As he had deceived Esau and Isaac and Laban, his sons had learned the same miserable art. They had practiced it on Shechem (Gen. 34), even as they had witnessed their father succeed in his deception of their grandfather Laban, and now it was to be expected that when they became jealous of another member of the family they would not hesitate to employ that same black art against their father. Thus does sin do its deadly work. Never content with doing harm to others for us, it always returns to play tragic havoc with us, and the harm that it does to us is greater than the harm that it does to those whom we try to deceive. Jacob had won the victory over sin in his own life at Peniel, but he had not checked the growth of the seed that he unintentionally planted in the lives of his children. He had been forgiven personally, but the full wages of sin were yet to be paid. He had sowed "his wild oats" and the seed had fallen into the hearts of his own sons. And now he must share in the reaping of the harvest. What a different story might have been told if he had had his conversion experience before he cheated Esau out of his birthright, instead of so many years later at Peniel! These sons would have grown up under Israel the "Champion of God," instead of under Jacob the deceiver, and they might not have learned to deceive.

The other scene in Jacob's closing years is the reunion with Joseph and his other sons in Egypt. The storm subsides again, and just in time to allow the last soft rays and glorious flashes of color from the setting sun to fall across the door of Jacob's tent before the day of his life ends and the night of death begins. Joseph

as a lad did not witness his father plying his craft of wickedness with Laban, but learned from him the ways of righteousness. And now when the harvest comes it is one of joy and peace and blessedness, the fruits of righteousness. Once more God's grace overcomes the world's sin where faith can be found, and the result is the glory of God in the happiness of man, and the advancement of God's purpose to save the world from sin.

V. JOSEPH THE DREAMER

Looking back a bit we may easily pick up the salient facts about Joseph's life before he was seventeen years old. He was born in Paddan-aram toward the close of the first fourteen years of Jacob's sojourn there, the first son of Rachel. He was six or seven years of age when his father struggled all night in prayer just before meeting Esau—old enough to be deeply impressed with that crisis and change in his father's life. He was a little older when Jacob took him and the rest of the family to the special consecration service at Bethel, and it was just a short time after that high experience that he walked through the shadows of deep sorrow in the death of his mother, near Bethlehem. What profound impressions were made upon the child's mind by these experiences, we may well judge by his conduct as a man.

Then followed ten years of intimate and happy association with his father. He became the errand boy of the family, taking messages from Jacob to the older sons, and bringing word back from them. There would be days when he would tarry in the fields with his brothers, learning from them many things that a shepherd must know. Soon he was helping them tend the sheep on occasions when he was needed, and perhaps doing many chores near home in connection with caring for his father's cattle and stock.

There was so much that was good and commendable in Joseph that we are tempted to put a halo of special sanctity around his head, and forget that he was human.

But the Bible account always presents the bad along with the good in telling the story of men's lives. There is a suggestion of something not altogether commendable in him in the statement, "And Joseph brought the evil report of them unto their father" (37: 2). He was a tattler, and there is no one who more quickly incurs the hatred of his brothers than the one who tattles on them. He may have been conscientious in doing it, because of his fondness for his father and his desire to serve him. And he may have exaggerated the reports, because of his desire to please him, without intending to make his tale into a lie, or to bring injustice upon his brothers. But when one makes tale-bearing his business, exaggeration of the reports becomes his chief temptation. He was to learn the truth of the proverb, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles."

Jacob displayed his affection for him by giving him the coat of many colors. It had long flowing sleeves, which prevented one from doing manual labor with it on, and therefore suggested that the wearer was of considerable importance and high rank. The richness of texture and color suggested wealth. It may be that the gift of such a coat indicated Jacob's intention to have Joseph receive the birthright, the blessing of the first-born. The brothers would be quick to read such a motive into the gift, after having often observed their father's partiality toward this younger brother. They probably heard also that Joseph had been busy reporting their misdeeds to Jacob, which added to their jealousy of him.

So they were in a hostile frame of mind when he told them of his dreams. The fact that he told them when he should have suspected their enmity indicates that he did not have the deceitful nature that they had inherited from their father. If he had been crafty and cunning in seeking his advantage at the expense of others he would have told Jacob in private, but he would have left his brothers to learn for themselves after the dreams had been brought to realization. But with naive frankness

he told them first, as if he expected them to rejoice with him in whatever good the dreams held in promise for him.

In his first dream he was reaping in the field, and their sheaves did obeisance to his sheaf. They immediately sensed the interpretation and hated him for having the dream, and for taking it seriously enough to tell it, as though he cherished it. In the second dream the sun and moon, and eleven stars did obeisance to him. This one he told openly in the family circle, and as a result his brothers hated him the more, and his father rebuked him but kept the saying in his mind, to be recalled and pondered later. He was an ambitious, enthusiastic, frank, adolescent boy. Selfish, but without deceit, he thought that his loved ones in the family would enter with him into the spirit of the dream. Maybe it was because his father had spoiled him somewhat; certainly it was also because his father had protected him from those experiences that harden a man to the ways of the world. We have known many other adolescent boys to exhibit the same characteristics: too young to know their place in life with any degree of certainty, and too inexperienced to know how others would react to their ambitious dreams, and yet simply bursting to tell some one. To whom should they speak but loved ones in the intimacy of the family circle? Where all is bright with mutual love and confidence, such dream stories provoke laughter and good-natured teasing, but where there is jealousy already deep-rooted, such stories provoke scowls of scorn and plottings of revenge.

VI. THE SALE OF A BROTHER

When one person is jealous there is some danger of trouble, but when several brothers together allow that same evil spirit to grip their hearts and make them hate another brother the certainty of the danger is thereby heightened. One will urge another with some new evil thought, and another will recall something that the

hated brother has said, and so with much talking the fire of hatred is nursed into a mighty flame. How true to human nature! Recall the woman that Burns has told about in his *Tam O'Shanter* who was busy all through the day "nursing her wrath to keep it warm." So many people nurse their grievances, seeming to derive some sort of fiendish delight from so doing. Joseph's brothers were much more dangerous together than they were alone, because they sympathized with each other too much in their imagined trouble, and exaggerated their common fear.

When Jacob sent Joseph on an errand to his brothers there was no suspicion in the lad's mind. He probably started out with his dreams for his thoughts and lived with them as he trudged along the way. What if his brothers and father did not believe them as he did? They might come true some day, and then they would see that he was not just an idle dreamer. With this splendid coat, and his father believing in him as he evidently did, he would be ready to make a start soon. Perhaps his father would let him have a flock and a few servants to himself. And how he would work to prove his metal! With Jehovah's favor upon him he would grow wealthy and powerful.

As he was coming across the fields toward them near Dothan, the brothers recognized him and began to plot against him. They had talked about him so much that they were ready to do almost anything to get rid of him. A few days before they might have been content with whipping him and sending him home, but now that they had worked up their feelings with so much talking, they were desperate. They were about to agree to kill him when Reuben intervened and suggested that they put him in a deep pit. It was his intention to come back later and deliver him from the pit and restore him to their father.

But as they were eating, another opportunity presented itself in the appearance of some Ishmaelite traders on

the caravan route to Egypt. Judah suggested that they sell Joseph as a slave, which they did. They sold their own brother to some of their cousins, for these Ishmaelites were descendants of the half-brother of their grandfather.

The coat of many colors was dipped in the blood of a goat and taken to Jacob with the implied suggestion that a wild beast had devoured him. The blow seemed more than the old patriarch could bear. He felt that he surely would die of grief, for Joseph was the idol of his heart, and the one in whom he had hoped that the promise of God at Bethel would be sustained and fulfilled. There was no other son of like temperament to take his place. The older ones were rough like Esau, and Benjamin was but a child of nine or ten. All his fond hopes and cherished dreams crashed around him. His sons in mock sympathy tried to console him, but he would not be comforted.

QUESTIONS

What do you think was Jacob's greatest temptation as he neared the close of his twenty years with Laban?

What aroused his fear?

Why were his wives so willing to help him to slip away from Laban?

Tell of the encounter when Laban overtook him.

What prayer at Bethel was now being answered?

Why was he afraid of Esau?

How did he plan to meet him?

Tell of Jacob's prayer at Peniel.

How did Esau greet him?

Why was it necessary for Jacob to go to Bethel again? What principle is exhibited in this experience?

When did Rachel die?

Describe Jacob's old age.

What are the two most important scenes in this period of his life?

How did sin act as a boomerang in Jacob's life? Is a principle demonstrated there?

When was Joseph born? Who was his mother?

What were the outstanding events in the first seven years of his life?

Characterize the next ten years.

Did Joseph have any faults as a boy? What was the significance of the coat of many colors?

What were his dreams?

Why did he tell them?

Why did the brothers plot harm against Joseph?

How did they happen to sell him? Who tried to befriend him?

OUTLINE

CHAPTER V

Genesis 31 to 37

JACOB LEAVES LABAN—31

Jealousy of his cousins

Slips away with the help of his wives

Overtaken by Laban but protected by Jehovah

Mizpah

MEETS ESAU AFTER PENIEL—32: 1-32; 33: 1-15

Alarming report of his messengers

Jacob's strategy

All-night prayer, followed by victory

Happy meeting with Esau

SECOND VISIT TO BETHEL—33: 16 to 35: 29

Grievous sin at Shechem

Call to Bethel. Confession and cleansing

Death of Rachel

OLD AGE

Devoted to Joseph

Shock of Joseph's disappearance

Reunion with Joseph in Egypt

JOSEPH THE DREAMER—37: 1-11

Birth and early life

Happy years with his father

A tattler

Coat of many colors

Dreams

THE SALE OF A BROTHER—37: 11-36

Jealousy multiplied

Evil plottings lead to Joseph's enslavement

CHAPTER VI

JOSEPH THE SERVANT OF GOD

It would seem that it was necessary for Joseph to get away from home now. If his brothers had been kind and spiritual in their treatment of him he might have grown there into the servant that God intended that he should be. But they were not of that type and so it was best for him to get away. God could guide him in Egypt better than he could in his home. Once again God is overruling evil for good. "All things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

I. POTIPHAR'S SERVANT

When the Ishmaelites arrived in Egypt, Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard, bought him to serve as a slave in his house. "And Jehovah was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." There is the secret of all his successes in the land of his forced adoption. It was a considerable depression in his ambitions when he was reduced from the joyous exulting at home, as he wore his handsome coat, to the humble routine of a house slave, but God was with him. He was beginning to learn the lesson that every servant of God must master: to walk with God humbly and gratefully in all circumstances. This is not yet the full lesson for Joseph, only the first part.

As he prospered in his work his master observed him, placed confidence in him, and then promoted him. As he continued to serve well Potiphar's confidence in him grew until he made him the custodian and overseer of all that he possessed. That is, he made him the custodian of all his material possessions, and allowed him to come and

go in his home with the freedom of a member of the family, but it was understood that a rigid prohibition was put upon him where Potiphar's wife was involved. Of course, he was not to touch her. He needed not to be told about that, for he came from a home where the relations between husband and wife were surrounded with a certain amount of sanctity. Nevertheless, the temptation came.

Joseph in his prosperity had become a handsome man, and now his master's wife became lustfully interested in him and attempted to seduce him. Whether or not there was a struggle within Joseph before he was able to resist the temptation the account does not tell us, but we may rest assured that there was. The temptation did not come to him unexpectedly, but grew gradually from day to day, and he reasoned what he would do if she should approach him. And he did a noble thing: he looked upon the temptation in the light of his relation to Potiphar, his true neighbor, and in the light of his relation to God. If he yielded to such a temptation he would violate all the trust that his master had reposed in him, and he would be going contrary to all the religious training that he had received at home and would commit a heinous sin against Jehovah his God, and the God of his father.

It is no wonder that he was able to resist the temptation. He studied it beforehand and saw it as sin in its social and religious relations. All of us would be cleaner and better if we would follow his example. Multitudes of sins are committed by people who rush headlong into temptation without considering its certain consequences, or its influence upon our relation to our fellow man and to God. Our afterthought is full of regret because our forethought is empty of calm and clear understanding of the sin that we are about to commit. Joseph was ready when the temptation came because he had prepared against that time with prayer to God and honest thought about his neighbor.

He escaped the temptation unscathed by sin, but the

evil scheming of the sinful woman brought suffering upon him. And that was to be expected, for that is the way sin works. When the tempter fails to lead an innocent person into sin, then all the fury of hell is turned loose to make the innocent suffer. Young people should remember that when they begin following evil companions. The story of Joseph gives us a lesson about sin that is true in every generation.

II. THE JAILER'S SERVANT

When Joseph was unjustly sent to prison there is no indication that he sulked in bitterness over his fate. So far as we know he did not even protest to Potiphar, but trusted in Jehovah that everything would work out right in the end. He was there because of an evil report that was told about him. One wonders if he did not recall how he had carried evil reports to his father about his brothers when he was a lad at home. Sin was acting like a boomerang with him as it had done in Jacob's experience. But Joseph was learning his lesson early. He was more responsive to chastening than was Jacob, and so God was able to make a righteous servant of him in a shorter period of time.

No longer a mere lad, but now a full-grown man with a strong faith in God, and with a determination to meet his fellow man on the ground of that faith, Joseph went about his new duties in the jail with the same confidence, courage, and cheerfulness that he had exhibited when he prospered in Potiphar's house. What better indication of strength of character could be given? How often it is true that men who were bold in their confidence during prosperity become hopelessly morose and bitter in adversity and depression! In the years following 1929 we heard of hundreds of wealthy men committing suicide when they saw their fortunes slipping through their fingers. Joseph was made of different timber, and he had been trained by Jacob after Peniel. In prison he prayed much and made himself happy in humble service. Can

we adjust ourselves after a social and financial disruption with as much grace and poise? Paul said, "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." That is a real test of our religion.

Joseph was as trustworthy in prison as he was in places of wealth. The saying of Jesus, "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much," works both ways. He that is trustworthy in great matters is also trustworthy in little things. The jailer soon found that Joseph could be trusted, and so he put him in charge of the other prisoners. And, more remarkable still, the prisoners felt that they could put their confidence and trust in him. He was superior to them in every way, and yet he did not impress them that he thought as much, but, rather, he was good to them and loved them and they responded to his kindness. They turned to him with their problems, having more confidence in his wisdom and integrity than they had in the professional interpreters and "fortune tellers" of their day.

When the baker and the butler told him their dreams and asked him to tell them the meaning of them, he replied in characteristic manner: "Do not interpretations belong to God? tell it me, I pray you." That showed the habit of prayer and confidence in God, rather than conceit and self-reliance. He had confidence in himself only as the servant of God. If they would tell him their problem he would ask God for the answer and then give it to them. They were not accustomed to hearing that from the professional interpreters. But then this man was different. Being a dreamer who prayed over his dreams, he was ready to interpret theirs.

The butler's dream meant that he would within three days be restored to his position in Pharaoh's service. Here was an opportunity not to be overlooked; far better than a friendly emissary to Potiphar. If he could get a word of friendly recommendation to Pharaoh his misfortune of being sent to prison would turn out to be a blessing in disguise. He could not know what God

had in store for him, to be brought about through this favorable contact, but he was alert to seize an opportunity to get out of his present predicament. His deliverance was to come, though not at once, and it was to be brought to him from God through humble service and in answer to prayer.

He also unravels the mystery of the baker's dream. But it does not have a happy conclusion. Events soon prove that Joseph was right in his interpretations, but the butler forgets his promise. Joseph's lesson in discipline is not quite complete, and the time is not ripe for him to come into Pharaoh's court. If Joseph will only keep faithful and patient in prayer, God will bring his providential purpose to a happy culmination in his life.

III. PHARAOH'S SERVANT

For two long and monotonous years after the butler left him Joseph continued to serve in the prison. He must have been sorely tempted to lose all faith in man, if not in God. The friend whom he had helped had forgotten to return the kindness, when all that he needed to do was to speak a word for him. But years that seem long and dreary while they are passing, appear as but a moment when we look back upon them from the vantage point of prosperity and happiness.

Pharaoh had two dreams that disturbed him much, for he felt that they must portend something about the days ahead of him that he should know. The wise men were called in but his dream was too much for them. Then the butler awoke from his two years of unkind forgetfulness of his fellow prisoner. He had left the prison with the good intention of returning Joseph's kindness, but when adversity left off and prosperity and ease began, he forgot the one who helped him in the day of his need. We should not take his oversight so seriously if his unkindness had ceased with him, but his like have been legion in every generation since, and his sin runs so true

to unregenerate human nature that we must put ourselves on guard lest we too become the victim of it. Here is one who borrows money when he is in great need, later becomes prosperous, but never remembers to return the loan to the friend. Or, here is a husband who is sustained in misfortune by a devoted wife, then fame and fortune come to him and he divorces her to marry a woman of his new-found society. Or, here is a son who gets a good start in life at the knee of a consecrated mother, then success comes and he forgets her, leaving her to lonely hours with her thoughts while he is busy in the life that she made possible for him.

But the butler woke up! Give him credit for finally coming to his senses. Joseph was summoned from the prison and presented to Pharaoh. He was older for his years in prison, but not harder. So many men come out of hardship hardened and cynical, but Joseph came chastened and consecrated, more willing than ever to seek divine guidance in service. When Pharaoh flattered him with the report that he had heard of his ability to interpret dreams, he answered, "It is not in me: God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." He was still the man of prayer, waiting for God to lead him. And he did not miss an opportunity to witness for Jehovah. In that respect he was greater than his great-grandfather, Abraham, who had been afraid to acknowledge his faith in Jehovah in the land of Egypt. We often fail to use similar opportunities to teach the importance of prayer. The Christian should live by prayer, and diligently seek to influence others so to live. We may rest assured that God is as ready to guide our friends through us in answer to prayer as he was to guide Pharaoh through Joseph in answer to prayer.

When Joseph had told Pharaoh that his dreams meant that seven years of famine would follow seven years of plenty, he suggested a plan whereby provision could be made in the years of plenty for the famine. That was an answer to prayer, too, though indirect. When he

prayed for guidance his native ability was quickened, his judgment was better, his thinking was clearer. Pharaoh liked the suggestion, and said to his court, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" Joseph had said that a man "discreet and wise" should be chosen for the task, and now Pharaoh said to him, "There is none so discreet and wise as thou." Did Joseph have himself in mind when he made the suggestion? Perhaps, but he did not recommend himself. He waited for others to discover his worth. His times were "in his hand who saith 'A whole I planned.'" He did not seek preferment, but he was ready to serve.

IV. THE PEOPLE'S SERVANT

When Pharaoh put him in the place of great authority and told him to follow his own judgment in working out his plans, Joseph looked upon his position as an appointment to serve the people. It was neither the pinnacle of personal glory, nor a step to something higher, but a call to service that was sufficient in itself. He showed no inclination to usurp authority, or to make it count for his own profit. When he was the servant of all the people he was as simple in his manner and as profound in his sincerity as when he served his fellow prisoners.

His wisdom was vindicated in the success that he had in organizing the country in preparation for the days when relief would be needed. He had storehouses provided in central places, and a portion of every crop was laid by for future use. Before the days of plenty came to an end all the storage places were filled to capacity.

He married and settled in his own home, and two sons were born to him, Manasseh and Ephraim. But he must have thought often of his father and brothers. He had never heard how his father reacted to the shock of his sudden disappearance. He often wondered if he were still alive. And the brothers! Were they still envious of him? Perhaps he thought of going back for a visit, but it would

not be pleasant if they still hated him, and anyway he was busy saving grain against the famine that was sure to come. O yes, the famine! That would bring some of his family down to Egypt in search of food, for Palestine was frequently visited by droughts, at which time the people usually looked to Egypt for help. That was what brought Abraham and Sarah into this land many years before. The famine that was coming would bring many Palestinians down to this land, and his brothers would be among them.

V. HIS BROTHERS' SERVANT

Jewish tradition has it that he followed this intimation of his own reasoning by stationing guards on all the main roads, with instructions to report the names of all Palestinian travelers in the land. In the second year of the famine the brothers came.

They were coming for help into the land whither they had sold Joseph as a slave twenty-one years before. Through all these years Jacob had refused to be comforted by them. They had thought that he would get over his sorrow shortly and they would all forget their "smart" little brother. But when people commit crime they never understand how deep are the furrows they plow in the hearts of those they wrong. Because Jacob has grieved so deeply they have grieved too. Perhaps they had often wished that they might have Joseph back with them. Jacob would be so glad to see him again, and they could forget his youthful dreams.

Now as they journeyed toward Egypt we can almost hear Reuben saying to his brothers that this may be their opportunity to right their great wrong. In fact, it may be, he tells them, that God has sent the famine upon them to take them down into Egypt so that they might find Joseph and buy him back out of slavery. As they talk about it a plan takes shape in their minds. They will scatter throughout the land and look in the places where slaves are most likely to be found, and after they have

found Joseph they will buy grain and return joyously to Jacob. This they do, but they are being watched by Joseph's servants who report that they must be spies. When they have failed to find their brother, so goes the Jewish tradition filling in the Scripture account, and the time has grown late, they meet at a central granary and apply for a purchase. Joseph has them brought into his presence. He would fain throw himself upon their necks and kiss them as his own brothers, but he does not yet know their attitude toward him. He must try them and see whether they will receive him in brotherly affection. In assumed gruffness he accuses them of spying upon the land, and has them thrust in prison for three days. Were they not the cause of his spending more than two years in prison? But this is no scheme of vengeance. He is seeking to know the true condition of their hearts before he reveals himself to them.

Having bound Simeon as a hostage, to make sure that they will return with Benjamin, he sends them away with bountiful provisions, and with each man's money in his sack. Simeon was the second oldest. Joseph's brothers must have been startled when he showed such strangely accurate knowledge of them. Reuben was the oldest, and therefore the logical one to be detained, but it was he who had attempted to save Joseph when his brothers plotted to kill him as a lad of seventeen.

With great difficulty the brothers persuade Jacob to let Benjamin accompany them on their next trip to Egypt. Reuben and Judah promise to stand surety for him and protect him with their lives. With a heavy heart Jacob consents, loading them with gifts and money to take to the ruler, and praying, "God almighty give you mercy before the man." That prayer is to be answered, and "the man" whom he fears will turn out to be the son whom he loves.

The dramatic story of Joseph's treatment of his brothers is not excelled in all literature. No matter how familiar we may be with it, it grips us anew with

every fresh reading. When the brothers returned with Benjamin he provided a private banquet for them in his home. This overwhelmed them and they became suspicious. It is not uncommon among a certain type of orientals to entertain an enemy at a feast just before wreaking vengeance upon him, and this is what they expected, for their guilty consciences smote them all the while they were in Egypt. But they presented their gifts to Joseph, having returned the money from their sacks to the chief servant with an apologetic explanation, "and bowed themselves to the earth." Thus was his childhood dream fulfilled, but he took no joy in the thought that at last he had his brothers bowing before him. On the contrary, when he looked upon them and saw Benjamin his heart overflowed, and he had to rush out of the room to avoid bursting into tears before them. After his first outburst he was able to control his emotions, and they went on with the feast.

Through all these scenes he had forgiven them, and they had lost their envious hatred for their younger brother, and were filled with a genuine desire to find him and restore him to their father. Their hearts were ready for the happy reunion, but he did not know their hearts, and they did not recognize him. It required a testing time for the brothers to reveal their deeper emotions to each other. That came when they started home heavily laden with provisions. Joseph's cup had been put purposely in Benjamin's sack, to determine whether they had the same evil spirit that they had when they sold him into slavery. If they allowed him to keep Benjamin as a slave when the cup was found in his sack he would know that their hearts had not undergone a change. If they were different men now they would try to save their younger brother. We must remember that he and Benjamin were full brothers, and the others were their half-brothers. It was a perfectly-planned test, and the result exceeded his fondest dream. Judah's plea for his brethren will forever remain a classic. Turn to it

now and read it through. His plea is not primarily for his younger brother, but for his aged father. He begs Joseph to let him become his slave in Benjamin's place and thus save his father from killing grief. It is enough. Joseph knows now that they are of a different spirit. The moving appeal on behalf of his father is more than he can bear. He must reveal himself to them, and talk more intimately with them about Jacob.

He not only forgives their sin against him, but he seeks to lead them to see that God had a good purpose in it all. They must see the greater good accomplished through God's sovereign mercy, and forget the evil of the past. He is their brother, but God has put him in a position where he can serve them in their time of need. They must hasten back to Jacob and bring him, and all their families and flocks, down to Egypt where they are to live on the bounty of the land. They sold him to be a slave, but God raised him up to be a savior, and he rejoices in being able to serve them, for he loves them.

VI. GOD'S SERVANT

Can you imagine the scene when the brothers return to their father? Jacob is sitting out in front of his tent looking off toward the south. His servant, watching by his side, sees a cloud of dust on the horizon. He tells his master and together they watch it with growing interest. The servant remarks that it is no ordinary train that is coming. Then he notices wagons, and he observes that they are Egyptian. In fact, he sees the emblem of Pharaoh on them. As the old patriarch nears this his heart sinks within him, for he is sure that Pharaoh has made prisoners of his sons and sent for him to make him a prisoner also. As he groans over this added sorrow that he feels certain is coming upon him, the sons come racing forward on their camels, shouting as they come: "Joseph is yet alive! He is the man whom we feared! He rules over all the land of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh! You are to come with us, and we are all to move down

there and live with him!" Did one ever make such a rapid change from the depths of despair to the heights of inexpressible joy? He is not only to have his son restored to him, but he is to live with him through the remainder of his life.

It is a great joy to the family, but the greater fact about it is that God is carrying forward his purpose in the covenant established with Abraham. Foreseeing the famine years before it came, God prepared the way through Joseph to bring Israel's family into Egypt to preserve them and make a mighty people of them, so that they might come back into the land promised to Abraham and possess it. Joseph's patience in undergoing hardship, and his loyalty to righteousness, made him a worthy servant of God.

Joseph had become a member of Pharaoh's court, adopting the manner and dress of the Egyptians, and moving with ease in their society. Nevertheless he did not deny that he was a Hebrew, and when his father and brothers came he presented them to the ruler of all the land. The Egyptians looked with scorn upon shepherds, and of this Joseph warned his brothers, but he was proud to own them as his own kin. He was never greater than in this scene. He was too big in heart to fear for his position if the king should know of the humble station of his family. Pharaoh, through his regard for Joseph, accepted gladly the blessing that Jacob bestowed.

The Genesis account closes with the Children of Israel settled in the land of Goshen. There Jacob died, and there Joseph also ended his earthly career many years later.

QUESTIONS

Who bought Joseph from the Ishmaelites in Egypt?

What position did he receive?

Tell of Joseph's temptation and how he met it.

What principle of sin is revealed in this experience?

What was Joseph's attitude toward life in prison?

How did the jailer treat him?

What was his experience with the prisoners?

Tell of the dreams that he interpreted.

What were Pharaoh's dreams?

How did he happen to call Joseph?

How had Joseph been affected by his two years in prison?

Where did Joseph get his wife?

What did Pharaoh do about the famine?

What success did Joseph have?

What would the brothers likely be thinking about as they came into Egypt?

Why did Joseph say they were spies?

Why did he bind Simeon instead of Reuben?

How did the brothers persuade Jacob to let Benjamin go with them?

How did Joseph receive them on their second visit?

Why was the cup put in Benjamin's sack? What did it prove?

How did the brothers return to Jacob from the second visit to Egypt?

How did Joseph receive his people? Where did they settle?

OUTLINE

CHAPTER VI

Genesis 39 to 50

POTIPHAR'S SERVANT—39. 1-20

Slave in the house of the captain of the guard

Promoted

Tempted

Suffers through the sin of another

THE JAILER'S SERVANT—39: 21 to 40: 23

Learns to be happy in prison

Becomes the trusted friend of the jailer and prisoners

Interprets dreams

Dreams of the butler and baker come true

PHARAOH'S SERVANT—41: 1-44

The butler forgets

Pharaoh dreams

The butler remembers

Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams

THE PEOPLE'S SERVANT—41: 45-57

Joseph's reaction to honor and authority

His wisdom vindicated

Married and has two sons

HIS BROTHERS' SERVANT—42: 1 to 45: 20

They come for help into the land whither they sold Joseph.

Looking for him, though he does not know it, they are taken
to be spies

Simeon kept as a hostage

They return with Benjamin

The test of the cup. Judah's plea

GOD'S SERVANT—45: 21-50: 26

The brothers return for Jacob

Jacob and Joseph reunited

The children of Israel settle in Goshen

CHAPTER VII

MOSES THE DELIVERER

Our account skips a period of many years, in which the Children of Israel grew from a family group of about seventy to a multitude of between one and two million souls. Before we take up the story with Moses we may notice briefly some of the effects of that long and trying sojourn in the land of the Pharaohs. Because opposition arose the Israelites were welded into a mighty union, and in union there is strength. In Palestine they would have wandered about and married into other national groups and thus dissipated their national heritage, but in Egypt they were forced to seek comfort and companionship in their own camps, for the Egyptians despised them as menial servants and treated them roughly. That has been a characteristic experience with the Israelites even to the present: when they have been abused they have been solidified into a unity that has given them strength, but when conditions have been easy for them and they have received kind treatment they have drifted away from their clannishness, and have been assimilated in some measure with other national groups.

They also derived much cultural benefit from their close contacts with the Egyptians. The Israelites were slaves, and as such were thrown into a very intimate relation with their masters. They learned much from the Egyptians and cherished it, but being slaves they were not able to throw off their nationality and become Egyptians, and so were forced to hold on to their religion and other treasures of their heritage, while at the same time acquiring as much as they could from the natives of their adopted country. It was an important part of the wise providence of God for his chosen people.

They must have learned something of military tactics, for the Egyptians at that time were good soldiers. Being forced to settle in one place and work out their livelihood there, they had to become masters of agriculture, as well as the arts of weaving and making furniture. They learned music also, and discovered their own native ability to compose songs, and sing in unison the inspiring themes of their religion. All these things were to help them immeasurably later when God led them out to become a great nation.

As the Genesis account was closed with the story of Joseph, so this new period opens with a study of the life of Moses. He is a character of a new type. He has been called Moses the practical in distinction from the earlier leaders who were idealists. He was called the meekest man of all the earth (Num. 12: 3), a man of great faith (Heb. 11: 24-29), and a prophet of the type of Christ (Deut. 18: 15-19; Acts 3: 22-26). Before you go further with the story here, turn to your Bible and read Hebrews 11: 23-29.

I. BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

When the Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph" came to the throne the Israelites began to suffer severe hardships. They were treated as slaves, driven under whips to perform their tasks, and then given no just part in the fruit of their labor. Because they worked hard and were guided in their religion to be temperate and frugal, rather than self-indulgent and profligate, they were strong and much to be feared if they should ever become organized under hostile leadership. Being ever alert to possible rebellion or invasion, Pharaoh concluded that it would be wise strategy to discipline them and control them while he had the opportunity and before they could cause trouble.

It was in line with this policy that the order was sent out that the Israelites should be afflicted grievously as they performed their tasks, and later that the male babies

born to the Hebrew women should be killed. But the Egyptians were not able to do all the evil that they purposed in their hearts, for God was with his chosen people and protected them.

Amram, a member of the tribe of Levi, married a cousin from the same tribe whose name was Jochebed, and to them were born three children, Miriam, Aaron and Moses. These children, who were to figure so prominently in the history of their people, were given a good start in life by having a great mother and a good father. The name Jochebed means "Jehovah-thy-glory," which signified the spirit of her life. In the midst of affliction she rejoiced that she could trust in God, and she determined to serve him at all cost. In Hebrews 11: 23 it is said, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." Moses became a man of faith because his mother and father lived by faith, because his early life was spent in a home of faith. You remember the scene so beautifully depicted by Burns in his poem, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, where the parents gather their children around them as they seek guidance in the Word of God and in prayer. The poet quite truly concludes, "From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs." And it was from such a home as Amram and Jochebed provided that Israel's glory as a nation was to spring. The strength of a nation will always be in the parents and homes where the children get their start in life.

The wise and agile mother was able to hide the child away for three months, and then the time came when a bold step must be taken. Everything must be risked on faith in God for the welfare of the child. What risk she took we fail to appreciate. What if Pharaoh's daughter had failed to take a kindly interest in the child, but had turned him over to the guards? Not only would the child have been destroyed, but in all probability the par-

ents would have been killed also. But she had faith, and that turned her risk into a glorious venture that she knew would somehow turn out well.

When the baby-filled basket was placed where the daughter of Pharaoh usually bathed, the sister was there to watch for her opportunity. Faith always seeks the wisest possible plan, and never takes an unnecessary risk. When the child was discovered Miriam was ready with the suggestion about a nurse and was commanded to secure one. Jochebed was called and employed to care for her son with wages promised. The plan worked and God richly rewarded her faith; she not only saved her son but received material compensation in addition. She was not trying to make money, but to save her child. God gave the child to her and also a measure of material blessings. Jesus promised the same principle when he said, "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

"And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son." What a story of faith! Jochebed gave her best to the child in training him in his tender years, and then when he was the sweetest and the dearest to her she gave him up to become the son of another, because it was God's will and for the highest good of the child. In Pharaoh's court he would have the best advantages in all the land, and perhaps in all the world. He would receive education and culture there that he could not possibly get elsewhere. She stifled her sobs, controlled her emotions, and sacrificed herself for her child's welfare. That is what mothers are for. Their children are given to them to serve God and the world, and not to indulge their selfish sentiments. The true mother is happiest when she is able to present her children to God for service.

It is thoroughly likely that Jochebed continued to nurse him after she presented him to Pharaoh's daughter. He was with his adopted mother only a short while

every day, and with his teachers a longer period, and then his nurse-mother had the privilege of putting him to bed, attending to his clothes, and seeing that he was presentable when the princess called for him. Fading more and more into the background, the mother was comforted as she saw her son receive the highest privileges in the land. In the minutes that he was with her, as she changed his clothes and bathed him, or tucked him in bed, she would tell him that all these blessings were coming to him in answer to her prayers, and to prepare him for a great life of service that Jehovah God must have in view for him. She must have often said to him: "It may be that you will be the chosen deliverer of our people, for God promised through Joseph that he would not leave us in this land. There must come a deliverer some time and I am praying that you, my son, may be the one."

Moses' training in those early years was of tremendous importance, although so little is said of it. He got his early religious training at home, and never departed from it. All that he learned at school was built upon the foundation of the principles of faith in God that he learned at his mother's knee and at the family altar, and that is as it should be. In the best schools of Egypt he was an apt pupil, grasping readily what the wisest teachers had to impart. And in the king's palace he imbibed the best culture that the world had to offer. He "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7: 22).

II. FIRST ATTEMPT TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE

The training that he received under his mother's tutelage, while he was becoming expert in the wisdom of the world, did not go for naught. He mastered the sciences of his day, but he also remembered his mother's religion and her prayers that he might be his people's deliverer. He became an Egyptian in manner and speech, but he remained an Israelite at heart.

One day he took it upon himself to visit his people and look for an opportunity to help them. He was getting well along toward forty years of age, in the prime of life, strong and alert and well educated. If God wanted him to deliver Israel, he mused, he must be getting at it. He would never accomplish it by sitting around the court. He must get out where his people are, and show them what he means to do. We can well imagine that he was meditating thus as he walked along.

He did not have to go far to find a case that called for a deliverer. Seeing a fellow Hebrew being abused by an Egyptian foreman, "he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." Then he returned to his room in Pharaoh's palace, feeling confident that he had made a good beginning in this business of delivering. That Israelite would tell his family, and the word would spread in secret whisperings that Jehovah had raised up another Joseph in the court of Pharaoh, who would surely deliver them soon from their sad plight. But if Moses found satisfaction in such musing it was short-lived, for the second day when he went out to strengthen his position in the minds and hearts of his fellow Hebrews he was met with a sneer of envy and suspicion, instead of an expression of gratitude and confidence. The report of his act the day before had indeed spread among his people, but instead of finding them cherishing it hopefully and looking upon him as another Joseph, he was shocked to discover that they were spreading it enviously and looking upon him as a conceited and arrogant son of luck who took pleasure in his assumed authority.

With his dream castles crashing around him, his mother's prayers coming to naught, and the immediate danger of the report getting to Pharaoh's ears, he fled the country. He must have remembered Joseph's experience of being snatched out of a position of high favor in Potiphar's house and cast into prison. If that

happened to Joseph when he was innocent, what chance would he have when his guilt could be proved quite easily? As he went on his way he must have concluded that Jehovah had not intended that he should be a deliverer after all. That high calling would come to another. In the meantime, he would get out of the country until his rash deed should be forgotten.

III. CALL AND COMMISSION

In the land of Midian he found safety and seclusion in the home of a shepherd priest. He married one of the man's daughters and settled down to a quiet home life. While shepherding his sheep he got acquainted with the wilderness area through which he was to lead Israel forty years. He learned the location of good watering places, and stored up other information that was to be of great service to him later.

Through the long days as he tended his sheep he had ample opportunity to meditate upon his past. He must have felt that he had made a miserable failure of his life. With the promise of a brilliant career in the king's court, he had ruined it all in a rash effort to help his people. No doubt he thought that it would have been better if he had left them to their fate, while he cultivated his opportunities at the court. Probably he could have done more for them by speaking a friendly word for them to Pharaoh. But he threw his chance away. One of the best educated men of his day, he blundered himself into the despised task of tending sheep. How his court friends would laugh if they could see him now!

One day as he had been musing thus on his failure, and the miserable plight of his people, God spoke to him out of the burning bush. He is indeed to be the deliverer of his people, but not by his power or his ingenuity. It is to be by the power and wisdom of God. We are not surprised, after these forty years of meditating upon his failure, that Moses said: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the Children

of Israel out of Egypt?" Had he not tried it once and failed? But this time God is to be with him, and he is to follow a plan of divine providence and not of human impetuosity.

God gives him the significance of the name Jehovah to comfort and guide him. "I am that I am" is his name, and that is to be remembered whenever he is called Jehovah. It points to his eternity and trustworthiness. Though conditions change and men fail, he would remain their great God, eternally the same.

When he hesitates and asks for a sign God gives him the sign of the rod that became a snake, and of the leprous hand, and finally the water that changed into blood. Aaron, his brother, is promised to him as a helper and spokesman. The brothers meet as Moses is entering Egypt, and they go carefully over Moses' call and commission to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage, and Aaron says that he has been called to help.

And so they begin their forty years of arduous labor together for Israel. They proceed at once to call a meeting of the representatives of their people and tell them of the divine call that has come to them, and after they have exhibited their signs the people believe. Was it because he did not have signs before that he failed to elicit the confidence of his people, or was it simply that he was hastily following his plan instead of seeking the Lord's? Perhaps it was the latter.

IV. CONTEST WITH PHARAOH

Armed with the promise of Jehovah that he would be with them, and with the assurance that their people believed in them, Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh to make their amazing request known to him and the Egyptians. It was the essence of a revolution that they proposed when they asked the ruler to let the Hebrews depart from the country. Can you imagine the Negroes in America before 1861 sending up a formal request to the government at Washington to let them return to

Africa? If you can appreciate the reaction that would have come from the slave-owners all over the land you may be able to understand what a bold thing it was for Moses to demand that his people be released.

But if Moses entertained any notions of an early and easy victory he was in for a speedy disillusionment. The Egyptian Monarch had no intention of letting six hundred thousand excellent slave-laborers get beyond his control. Haughtily refusing to take them seriously, the king sent Moses and Aaron away, and at the same time issued the decree that the burden of the slaves should be made heavier by requiring them to find their own straw but make the same number of bricks.

The leaders in Israel then turned to Moses, putting the entire blame for their sad plight upon him. He did the only thing that he knew to do, and the wisest thing that he could have done: he went to God in prayer about it. Then Jehovah prepared him for the ordeal that was ahead, by telling him that Pharaoh would be stubborn, and that the victory would be achieved only after a long struggle and only by the power of God. Therefore, he must speak to the children of Israel and prepare them for the contest that they might have patience and faith. Then he must go before Pharaoh boldly, in the confidence that Jehovah would be with him in sufficient power to deliver all the Israelites from their bondage.

Then the struggle was on, a struggle between the God of the Hebrews and the gods of the Egyptians, with Moses and Aaron representing Jehovah and the magicians representing the religion of Egypt. It was also to be a contest between obedient faith and fickle superstition. Pharaoh would not respond to reason; therefore, God resorted to miraculous intervention.

The first encounter brought forward the sign of the serpent. When Aaron cast the rod upon the ground it became a snake. Then the king, accepting the challenge, sent for his magicians who succeeded in making their rods look like snakes, or their snakes look like rods.

At that point it seemed that the contest was even, and that the magicians were as great as Moses. Just then Moses' rod-snake crawled over to the others and swallowed all of them, which was not only a sign of the superiority of Moses over the Egyptian magicians, but also indicated that the worship of Jehovah as represented by him was superior to the serpent-worship that they represented. It was done to impress Pharaoh, for he was to make the decision, but he dismissed it as a show and refused to listen further to the pleas of the slaves.

But it was not a show for entertainment. The rod that was used in discounting the pagan worship of serpents would be employed in bringing to light the vanity of other forms of false religion as practiced by the Egyptians.

The second encounter and the first plague came as Pharaoh was on his way to the Nile, the river that was sacred to Egypt. When Aaron stretched forth the rod all the water in the land became blood. The fish died and a terrible stench arose, so much that the river that had been worshiped now became abhorred by all. But again the king hardened his heart and refused to heed the cries of the slaves.

The plagues of the frogs, lice, and flies evidently pointed to the vanity of the worship of the scarab, a beetle that was revered by the Egyptians as the symbol of resurrection and fertility. When the lice came upon the people the services in the Egyptian temples were automatically stopped, for it was a law among them that a priest could not take his place in the temple while he had lice on him. In each case the superiority of Jehovah was demonstrated over the gods of Egypt.

Then came the murrain upon the cattle, a direct challenge to the Apis-worship of Egypt. The sacred bull was their greatest god, the incarnation of the god of the lower world. If he had any power on earth at all, surely he would be able to protect the cattle! But, on the con-

trary, the murrain killed all the cattle of Egypt, with the exception of the land of Goshen.

There was a belief among the Egyptians that they could check the spread of evil by sprinkling ashes from the altar toward the sky. To expose the weakness of such a belief Moses signalized the coming of the sixth plague by that sign. When the boils came upon them they saw that their ceremony could be used by the true God to produce the opposite effect.

Then came the hail, the seventh plague, to rebuke them for their worship of the elements and to prove to them that Jehovah is supreme over all the forces of nature. This was followed by the locusts, indicating that the pest that they were in the habit of attributing to their gods was really under the power of Jehovah. The plague of the darkness was a rebuke to their worship of Ra the sun-god. They believed that he brought forth the light of the midday sun, but where was he when the darkness continued in the land? It was Jehovah, the God of Israel, who decreed the darkness and three days later suspended it. He makes the light to shine. He is to be worshiped, and not the sun.

Each time Pharaoh relented, but his repentance was born of a fear that quickly subsided when the immediate danger was removed. It was not the true repentance that is a change of the mind and heart toward God, carrying the surrender of the life to him. Pharaoh was like a multitude of others who pray for deliverance in time of trouble, and then forget God when the trouble has passed. He was also like many others in that his skepticism was mainly of the heart and not of the head. He refused to believe because he did not want to obey God, and that is true of the average skeptic. There is a vast difference between the superstition of Pharaoh and the faith of Moses.

These contests must have been of tremendous value to Moses in strengthening his faith and in preparing him for future hardships. They were valuable also to the

Israelites. Out in the wilderness, tempted to give up and quit, their courage would be strengthened by remembering their deliverance from Egypt.

V. THE PASSOVER

Throughout the plagues there was a marked contrast between the effect on the Egyptians and that on the Hebrews. From the fourth plague on, the Israelites were exempted from the ravages of the pestilences that fell upon the land; consequently, they were enjoying a progressive peace and contentment, while their oppressors were experiencing increasing suffering. This gave the Israelites the opportunity that they needed to get everything in readiness for the departure from the land of their bondage.

One last stroke of Providence was to fall upon the Egyptians to prove to them that Jehovah is the only true and living God, and to make Pharaoh let God's people go. This time it is to be a visit of death to every Egyptian home, including Pharaoh's, showing that Jehovah alone exercised complete control over all life. Ample warning is given to Israel so that the prescribed preparations might be made. They are to gather their possessions, their flocks and herds, and make ready for travel. At an appointed time they are to sprinkle the blood of a slain lamb on the door-post of each house, so that the death angel might pass over them.

It is the zero hour for Israel. Behind them lay the long years of bondage, before them the beginning of freedom; behind them the agonizing cries of an enslaved people, before them the birth of a nation. Old things are passing away, and a new day is about to dawn, the first day of the first year of their calendar, and ever after it is to be a great memorial day (Ex. 12: 14).

Thus the Feast of the Passover was established. Three things are to be noted about it: (1) It was appointed of God, as his way to accomplish the deliverance of his people, and therefore accepted by him when kept in faith.

(2) It was rooted in the needs of the people historically, but it also symbolized the people's need of God in every generation; they were not to be a self-reliant but a God-trusting people. (3) A blood sacrifice was provided as a substitute for the first-born of the people, thus symbolizing the substitutionary atonement that is at the heart of the Bible doctrine of redemption, and that culminated in Christ's voluntary and sacrificial gift of himself for the sins of the world. "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5: 7). When we observe the Lord's Supper we are keeping the Feast of the Passover as it has been fulfilled in our Saviour's death.

The command that each family should sprinkle the blood on the door-post constituted a test of faith for the Israelites. It was the moment for every family to decide whether to risk everything on faith in God's promises, or to continue in bondage to Pharaoh; whether to follow after liberty in an untrodden path, or to follow in the well-worn path of slavery; whether to be the children of God in a world-redeeming service, or to live and die as the slaves of Pharaoh. Each one had to decide in the family council. It was an act of faith and obedience for every Israelite.

At midnight a cry went up from the land of Egypt, a mighty cry that began with the first discovered dead child, and swelled with tremendous crescendo as family after family learned of its sorrow, until the whole nation travailed in grief. The Israelites alone were not weeping, for they had been spared. When Pharaoh heard of this he sent his messengers to them urging them to go at once. And they arose and started on the great journey, six hundred thousand men, not counting the children. Driving their cattle and sheep as fast as possible, carrying their babies in their arms, a pack on the back of every person old enough to carry a burden. What an exodus! What a venture of faith! Where can they possibly go? They have been in Egypt four hundred and thirty years, and so they have no land to claim as their own. What

can they do? They are a simple shepherd people, venturing to lay aside their slave rags and put on the clothes of freemen, and walk away from the mighty kingdom of Egypt.

QUESTIONS

How many Israelites were in Egypt at this time?

What were some of the benefits derived from their bondage?

Why did Pharaoh oppress Israel?

Who were Moses' parents? Tell of his mother's faith.

What was the plan for saving Moses when he was three months old?

What opportunity did his mother have to train him?

Why did Moses kill the Egyptian?

What was the reaction among the Hebrews?

Why did he run away?

Where did he go?

What did the forty years of shepherding in Midian mean in the life of Moses?

Tell of his call. Why was he afraid to go to Pharaoh?

What signs were given to him? Who was to help him?

What was the first experience with Pharaoh? How did he treat the Israelites after that?

What was the religious significance of the plagues?

Name them and tell the religious point in each

What did the magicians do?

What was the value of the contest to Moses and the Hebrews?

What preparation did the Israelites make for the last plague?

Why did they have to sprinkle blood on the door-posts?

What are the three points of significance in the establishment of the Passover?

In what way was it a test of faith?

OUTLINE

CHAPTER VII

Exodus 1: 1 to 13: 16

FROM A FAMILY TO A MULTITUDE—1: 1-7

Benefits derived from the bondage

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD—1: 8 to 2: 10

Israelites oppressed by Pharaoh

Moses born into a family of faith

Adopted by the princess, nursed by Jochebed

Trained in the court of Pharaoh

FIRST ATTEMPT TO DELIVER—2: 11-22

Kills an Egyptian to save an Israelite

Flees to Midian

CALL AND COMMISSION—2: 23 to 4: 31

Meditations in Midian

Called at the burning bush

Aaron called to help

The people believe

CONTEST WITH PHARAOH—5 to 10

Rods and snakes

Nine plagues

THE PASSOVER—11: 1 to 13: 16

The people prepared

Feast ordained

Significance

CHAPTER VIII

MOSES THE LAW-GIVER

I. CROSSING THE RED SEA

At early dawn on the fifteenth of Nisan (corresponding to our April) the Israelites set out upon their journey. It was understood among them that they were to start early in the morning, although they had been told not to leave their homes before day (Ex. 12: 22). They were dressed and packed, ready to go, and so by families and small groups they left the land of bondage and started on their march to liberty.

They had evidently agreed upon Rameses as the meeting place, and Succoth as the first stop, and the leaders had been instructed in the plan of organization. As the groups came up they were placed in columns by tribes and families, and urged onward as rapidly as possible. Knowing the fickleness of Pharaoh as he did, Moses felt that there was no time to be lost. If Pharaoh should pursue them he would come in chariots, and it would be easy to overtake the walking multitude.

The pillar of cloud went before them by day, and the pillar of fire by night. Thus did Jehovah indicate to them when and whither they should move, and when and where they should camp. From Succoth it seemed that they were about to take the regular route of travel between Palestine and Egypt, the way that Jacob and his sons probably came down into Egypt. But that was not to be. They had many things to learn before they would be ready to enter the Promised Land. For one thing they were not sufficiently trained to go up against the mighty Philistines, and if they should meet them right soon the Israelites would become frightened and either turn back to Egypt or surrender to the Philistines and become their

slaves. They must also receive the laws by which they are to be governed as God's people. Furthermore, they needed time to meditate and get better acquainted with God. As it was necessary for Paul to go into Arabia after his conversion, so it was necessary for Israel to go into the wilderness after the Exodus.

By a sudden change of direction to the south God soon led them to Pihahiroth between Migdol and the sea. There they camped. A lookout noticed a cloud of dust out on the horizon and sensed that it was Pharaoh coming against them with his army. Once more the king had suffered a moral relapse; his repentance had drifted from him as quickly as the necessary formalities of the nationwide funeral were over, and now he was driving hard to overtake his slaves and force them to return to their labor. No doubt, as he urged his horses on, he was planning to add yet more to the burdens of the Hebrews. He would teach them that they could not trifle with Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt! He would double again the number of bricks that they would be required to make, and let them continue to find their own straw!

The lookout rushed to Moses, shouting that the Egyptians were coming. But that meek man was not overwhelmed with the report; in fact, he expected it, for he was a man of prayer and therefore he was ready for the emergency. The people became excited and frightened as the news spread like a forest fire through the camp. They were trapped, they thought, between the sea and the desert, with the Egyptians riding hard upon them from the rear. What could they do? Only one thing, said Moses, and that was to trust in God. They were not able to deliver themselves, but man's extremity is always God's opportunity, provided man trusts God. Jehovah would make one last demonstration before them of his supremacy over the gods of the Egyptians. Thereafter they should never be able to doubt his willingness and power to save them in any experience of need.

The pillar of cloud came between the two camps, put-

ting the Egyptians in darkness, but there was a silver lining to that cloud on the Israelites' side and they had light. Then at God's decree a mighty wind made a path through the bed of the sea for the fleeing slaves and they went across with their families and their flocks and herds. No sooner were they on the opposite shore than the Egyptians discovered that they had fled their camp into the sea. Confident that they could go anywhere these slaves could, they drove pell-mell into the bed of the sea. But God caused the wind to change, the tide came in, and the heavy chariots began to sink in the sand and water, and soon the mighty army was a swirling mass of frantic men and horses, as they struggled to save themselves from the watery grave (see Psalm 77: 16-20).

On the other shore God's people stood speechless. It was Jehovah's hour, and no time for them to talk. They were awed by the scene, which was a majestic display of divine power. They had triumphed over their enemies, and yet they had not done a thing but obey God's command. Then they broke forth into song, led by Moses and Miriam, praising Jehovah for his goodness in delivering them from the Egyptians. This poem of Moses is probably the oldest in the world, and for sublimity of conception and grandeur of expression remains one of the greatest. Turn to it now and read it through.

As we pause here there are at least four important lessons that come to us out of this Red Sea experience: (1) Take every problem to God in prayer. (2) If God commands us to go forward in danger we may know full well that he will lead us safely through. (3) When we are faced with danger we should first seek to determine whether we are there because of our selfish interests, or in obedience to God's command. "To go into danger thoughtlessly, is rashness; to go into it wantonly, is foolhardiness; but to go into it because only thereby can I follow my Master, and do what he commands, is true courage; and at such times I shall always find him at my side." (4) After deliverance we should be grateful.

II. ON THE MARCH

As they turned away from the sea they must have experienced a new feeling of security and independence as a people. In the brief space of a night they had been marvelously delivered from the danger of further attack at the hands of the Egyptians. "They had passed from Africa into Asia, from the dark continent into the region of light." They were now on their way to the Promised Land, and a career of service. Immediately before them stretched the level plains of the Arabian desert, where their fathers had wandered in former times, and where Moses had fed the flocks of his father-in-law. There was no need to hurry now. With the Egyptian army out of the way they could proceed leisurely, allowing time for the animals to graze and the people to find food as they went on their way.

After three days of marching in the Wilderness of Shur, without finding good water, they came to Marah. Here there was plenty of water, but it was bitter, and the people murmured, but Moses prayed about it. When he had followed the answer to his prayer and the water had been made tasty, he brought to them a special word from the Lord: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his eyes, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee which I have put upon the Egyptians: for I am Jehovah that healeth thee." This was the beginning of the covenant at Sinai, for it embraced in principle all that was ultimately given. It pledged the people to receive and obey all that the Lord should later command. On his part God promised to protect them from calamity. Deliverance increases our obligation to God, and the assurance that he will deliver us again in our future times of trouble.

Their next recorded stop was at Elim, where were twelve springs of water. Thence they came to the Wilder-

ness of Sin. They had been on the march about six weeks, and their food supply had been used up. Tired and hungry they began to compare their present lot with the conditions under which they had lived in Egypt. Their fickle and short memories recalled only the fact that they had food there, while they forgot the burdens and oppression.

Providing food for a multitude of nearly two million people was no small problem. What was Moses to do? They could not wait to plant crops even if they had enough fertile ground around the camp, for the people would starve long before harvest time. Some one says that they should have eaten the cattle and sheep which they had, but all that they had would probably not have lasted more than a few days, or a few weeks, at best. Then, too, the flocks and herds probably did not belong to all the people in common, but to a small group who had managed to prosper and save something in the last years of bondage. There was simply no way for Moses to provide enough food at once. Then the question became, what would God do? The situation could be saved only by a miraculous answer to prayer.

While the people complained and Moses prayed, God once again wrought their deliverance. In the mornings they were given manna, a bread-like substance that came like dew on the ground with every new day except the sabbath, and in the evenings the camp and surrounding ground swarmed with great coveys of quail. The people had only to go out and gather the food. They were fed by the grace of God. The gift of the manna continued for forty years, and remained for centuries in the thought of the Hebrews as one of the greatest signs of God's presence with them. It was often referred to for the encouragement of the people and used in their prayers of gratitude and praise (Neh. 9: 15). On one occasion when the Jews asked Jesus for a sign they reminded him of the Scripture concerning the manna, that God, "gave them bread from heaven to eat" (John 6: 31).

From the Wilderness of Sin, Moses led the people to Rephidim, but there was no water for them to drink. True to the habit that they had early formed, they complained to their leader, reminding him that they had food and water in Egypt, and blaming him with their present hardship. In vain he reminded them that Jehovah was still their God and that they were really tempting him. But that only added to their peevishness, and they became so excited that they threatened to stone him. Moses took the matter to the Lord in prayer, and water was miraculously provided.

Their next problem was their first military encounter. The Amalekites (see Gen. 14: 7; Num. 24: 20) challenged their right to pass through that country, and the Israelites had to defend themselves in battle. The people of Amalek were an old nation, for we have a reference to them as a nation in the earlier life of Abraham (Gen. 14: 7), and as "the first of the nations" (Num. 24: 20), and a suggestion in another place that they had at one time held Palestine (Judges 12: 15).

Moses had discovered Joshua as a courageous and capable leader, and he gave to him the task of selecting and training an army and leading against the enemy. While the battle was on, Moses and Aaron and Hur stood on the top of a hill, watching and praying. Moses stretched forth his hands, holding the rod that had been the symbol of God's presence and miraculous power, and the Israelites gained their first victory.

III. A GOOD FATHER-IN-LAW

As the Israelites came toward the Wilderness of Sinai, the report of their presence in the vicinity and their victory over the Amalekites was brought to Jethro. Probably Moses sent a messenger to him inviting him to come for a visit with him, bringing his daughter, Moses' wife, and their two sons with him. (Moses had evidently sent his wife and sons back to Midian after starting to Egypt with them. Compare Exodus 4: 18-26 with 18:

1-4.) Moses went out to meet them as they approached his camp, and greeted them warmly. Then as they made themselves comfortable in his tent he recounted his experiences since he had left them in Midian, dwelling at length on the miraculous way in which Jehovah had delivered his people again and again.

Jethro, apparently a believer in Jehovah, rejoiced with his son-in-law in the signal victories that God had given through his leadership, and joined with him in a special sacrifice of thanksgiving. Then came the elders of Israel to welcome their leader's father-in-law with a feast.

The routine of the camp was not interrupted for long, and soon Moses was once more absorbed in the multitudes of duties in molding his people into a nation. While his father-in-law sat nearby he labored all through the day with the problems that the people brought to him, and at the close of the day he was completely exhausted. Jethro noticed that the lines were deepening on Moses' face, and he began to wonder what the Children of Israel would do without their leader. If this daily grind kept up he would surely not last much longer, and the people were not yet sufficiently trained to go forward without him. He set his mind to work on the matter, for it seemed to him to be of primary importance.

And so it came to pass, as they sat in front of the tent at the close of the day, that the priest of Midian undertook to give his son-in-law a bit of advice. He suggested that Moses organize the people into groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, with a judge over each group, and the judges would relieve him of a great mass of the detail work. The problems could be classified into minor, middle, and major cases: the elementary matters could be handled by the first judge who had a group of ten; certain other questions would be brought to the judge of fifty; the problems that were more complex could be brought to the judge of a hundred, or of a thousand. The matters that could not be handled satisfac-

torily by these judges, or that were immediately classified as of major importance were brought to Moses. In other words, here we have the simple outline of the plan of courts that has been followed in many nations since. In our country we have the magisterial, county, circuit, and federal courts. It came to us from Moses and he got the idea from his father-in-law.

Indeed, here were two noble characters; Jethro was smart enough to see a simple solution to a complex problem, and Moses was big enough to accept his advice and act upon it. Moses was meek in his relations with his father-in-law as well as with his God, and he was a greater leader for his meekness. What do you suppose would have been the outcome if Moses had resented Jethro's advice, and regarded it as presumption to think that he could tell him how to handle his people? (He might have reminded his father-in-law that he had led them with some measure of success so far without advice from outsiders. There are plenty today who react in that manner to friendly advice.) The result might have been that Moses would have died before his important work as law-giver and prophet was finished. We may well thank God today that he had sense enough to accept good advice.

Another mark of greatness in Moses was his concern to give Jethro full credit for the institution of this splendid system of judging. Evidently that was the only reason he had for including the visit of his father-in-law in the account that he wrote of the experiences of this period. A weaker and more selfish person might have used the plan and then taken full credit for the results achieved.

IV. THE COVENANT AT SINAI

It was approximately a year after Moses received his call at the burning bush that he found himself right back in the same locality, around Mount Sinai, at the head of a multitude of people. Hitherto had Jehovah led him, even as he said he would. But what of the future? Where

would they go from here? This was not the Land of Promise that figured in the covenant with Abraham. What was he to do now? According to his habit he took his problem to the Lord in prayer. We can imagine that he sought the same spot where God had spoken to him out of the burning bush, and that he removed his sandals from his feet as he had done before, and prayed alone, asking his God to tell him what he should say to his people.

The answer to the prayer came: "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Ex. 19: 3-6.) They form a holy covenant, sealed with blood (Ex. 24), pledging their abiding allegiance to Jehovah while he promises to be with them as long as they obey him.

It is to be a covenant of law, that the people may know the will of their God and do it, and the first and fundamental statement of law is given in the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, which may be divided into two groups.

The first group deals with the relationship of the people to God, and embraces the first four Commandments. The first commands monotheism, the worship of only one God, Jehovah. Other gods are no gods at all. They are not to be worshiped. The second forbids idolatry. God is spirit and not to be worshiped through images or pictures. The third forbids profanity. God's name is holy and is not to be made common among sinful men. The fourth commands observance of the sabbath as holy, for it is God's day.

The other group deals with the social relationships of the people. The fifth commands respect and honor for

parents, placing divine recognition upon the home as the fundamental unit in human society. The sixth forbids murder, recognizing the sanctity of human life. God gives life, and only God should take it away. The seventh forbids adultery, commanding purity of relations between men and women. The eighth forbids stealing, recognizing the right of every individual to the possession of property. The ninth forbids slander and gossip. The tenth forbids covetousness, commanding the control of the desires of the heart with reference to the possessions of another.

These Commandments are to be the foundation of all the laws to be given to Israel. As Dr. Sampey suggests, they may be regarded as Israel's constitution, all else in the Pentateuch comprising the statutory law (The Heart of the Old Testament, p. 94). In first setting forth the Commandments that cover their direct relations with God, the principle is laid down that religion is the foundation of morality. Man's first duty is to love God and serve him supremely, and the second obligates him to love his fellow man and to live for his welfare.

The civilized world recognizes the primary importance of these laws. They have not been repealed in the thinking of people, but have been made the foundation of all systems of law. Our task is not to improve upon them, but to observe and obey them. Jesus interpreted them as applying to the motives of the heart as well as to the deeds of the life. He said murder begins with hatred, adultery begins with lust, and so all the words of the Decalogue point to the condition of man's heart.

The purpose of the Decalogue was to provide a basis of molding the people into a national unity. If the wisdom of Jethro is to bear fruit it must be subordinated to the wisdom of Jehovah, and the commandments of God must be the pattern of principles on the basis of which judgment is rendered. If there is uniformity of thought among the people about their duties to God and to one

another they will be a united people. The Decalogue was also given to provide a basis on which all future legislation would be given, and on which they would realize the progressive development of God's plan of redemption. The revelation and redemption in Jesus Christ did not abrogate the Ten Commandments, but expanded them into a spiritual relationship that could not become a reality apart from him.

V. CIVIL LAW

In making specific applications of the commandments in the Decalogue the civil and religious laws were given through Moses. We may consider the first here, and leave the second group for the last chapter.

In Exodus 21 to 23, the ordinances point mainly to the regulation of the civil and social life of the Israelites, although there are some scattered throughout that have to do with religious ceremonies. In some of the other chapters, such as the thirty-fourth, civil ordinances are given in connection with other prescriptions. Our concern here is not so much to get them arranged according to the time when they were given, but to seek to understand the general meaning and purpose of them.

These ordinances deal with the treatment of slaves (21: 2-11, 20, 21, 26, 27); murder or manslaughter (21: 12-15); kidnaping (21: 16); treatment of parents (21: 17); responsibility for injuring another person (21: 18-19, 22-25); responsibility for thievery and property damage (21: 28 to 22: 15); sexual immorality (22: 16-19); treatment of widows, orphans, and strangers (22: 21-24); lending of money (22: 25-27); justice and fair treatment of neighbors (23: 1-9); and the sabbath and agricultural laws (23: 10-12). Along with these three chapters one should study Deuteronomy 20 to 25, where some of these laws are restated and others are added to them.

VI. THE LAW THROUGH MOSES

Whence came all of these laws? Out of the mind of Moses? Out of his knowledge of Egyptian legislation? He always insisted to his people that they came from God. When he spoke to them he began by saying that God had told him what to say to them. And when he wrote an account of them he attributed them to God. Certain it is that the impression was made on all Israel for all time to come that the law was not from Moses, but through Moses from God. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1: 17).

But how did it come from God through Moses? How did the human ruler get it from the divine Ruler? The answer is, through prayer. Moses was in prayer every time Jehovah spoke to him. He went up into the mountain, his prayer place, to commune with his Lord, and to secure guidance in the tremendous task that was before him, and when he came back he had a message for the people concerning God's will that should be their law.

QUESTIONS

Describe the departure of the Israelites from Egypt.

Where did they assemble and what was the first stopping place?

How were they led? What was the route?

How did Moses and the Israelites react to the report that the Egyptians were pursuing them?

How were they protected from the Egyptians while they crossed the sea?

Describe the crossing.

What lessons do we learn from this incident?

What was their experience at Marah?

What happened at Elim?

How was food supplied?

What happened at Rephidim?

Tell of the battle with the Amalekites. Who was the leader of the Hebrew army?

Who was Jethro? Did he believe in Jehovah?
Where had Moses' wife been since he left Midian? Why had she not accompanied him to Egypt?
What problem did Jethro recognize? What was his advice?
Did Moses take it in good spirit?
Who wrote the account of Jethro's valuable help?
How was the covenant established at Sinai?
What two relationships are dealt with in the Ten Commandments?
Name them according to the groups.
What was the importance of the Decalogue in the life of Israel?
What is the importance of it today?
Where are the civil laws mainly to be found? With what do they deal?
Where did Moses get the laws?
How did he get them?

OUTLINE

CHAPTER VIII

Exodus 13: 17 to 23: 33

CROSSING THE RED SEA—13: 17 to 15: 21

Israelites ready to leave
Meet at Rameses, stop at Succoth
Cloud and fire for guidance
Pursued by the Egyptians
Miraculous passage
Lessons

ON THE MARCH—15: 22 to 17: 16

Marah
Elim
Bread and meat
Rephidim
The Amalekites

A GOOD FATHER-IN-LAW—18

Arrival of Jethro and Moses' wife and children
Jethro sees a problem

Advises Moses

Beginning of system of courts

THE COVENANT AT SINAI—19 to 20

A covenant sealed with blood

A covenant of law. The Ten Commandments

Division of the Commandments into two groups

Importance of the Commandments

CIVIL LAW—21 to 23

Specific applications of the general laws

Ordinances classified

THE LAW THROUGH MOSES

Came from God

Came to Moses through prayer

CHAPTER IX

MOSES THE PROPHET

The headings for these last two chapters should not be taken as indicating a break in the experience of Moses when he ceased to be the law-giver and became the prophet, for all that he did in speaking for God to Israel designated him as a prophet. And many of the strictly religious and ceremonial laws were given at the same time that the civil and moral laws were declared. But in this last period he is pre-eminently the prophet.

I. INTERCEDING FOR ISRAEL

At the command of Jehovah, Moses again went up into the mountain, leaving Aaron and his two sons and seventy elders to take charge of the people until he should return. He remained away from the people so long that they began to wonder whether he would ever return. Their religious fervor and gratitude to God for all his blessings began to wane, and they talked of what they would do without him. They knew the religion of Egypt better than the true worship of Jehovah, and soon their minds were recalling the wild orgies that so frequently took place in the Egyptian temples, and then some one suggested that they might have a service like that out here in the wilderness. The suggestion was brought to Aaron, and he agreed, probably thinking that he would not be forsaking the worship of Jehovah but merely giving the people a visible symbol to make the service more real to them. It was against just this sort of thing that one of the Commandments was given, but they had forgotten those sacred injunctions for the time being.

Miriam led a group of the women in playing on their musical instruments and singing, while others presented

the vulgar dances of the Egyptians, and the rest of the people gave themselves over to unrestrained indulgence in the heathen rites before the image of the calf.

Jehovah's wrath was kindled against them and he let Moses know that he would be willing to destroy them and begin over again with him and his children. But Moses prayed for them, reminding God of the great things that he had already done for them, and of the impression that had been made on the Egyptians by the miraculous deliverance from bondage, and now if they should be destroyed in the wilderness the Egyptians would say that the God of the Hebrews was not able to take care of them after delivering them.

Feeling that his prayer had been answered and that Jehovah had turned his wrath aside, Moses went down to the camp. As he came into full view of the wild scene, his own anger broke loose. He threw the stone tablets upon the ground, breaking them, and then he burned the golden calf, and cast the ashes on water and made the people drink it. After leading the Levites on a bloody trail of vengeance and atonement he went back to the mountain to pray.

Broken in heart because of the sins of the people, he cried out to God to forgive them. He is the magnificent man of prayer here, more like Jesus in Gethsemane than any other figure in the Old Testament. He put himself on the altar as a sacrifice for the people. "Forgive their sin," he prayed, "and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."

The prayer is heard and the sins forgiven, as the people are led into a prolonged period of mourning and repentance. And Moses comes to know God in more intimate fellowship. It is said now that "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33: 11). It is significant that he does not attain to such a high place of spiritual experience with God until after he enters into his self-sacrificing prayer of intercession for his people. It was said of Job that

the Lord turned his captivity when he prayed for his friends (Job 42: 10). God is our Redeemer and we do not know him intimately until we know him in the redemption that is wrought through suffering and crucifixion. Paul prayed that he might know the Redeemer in "the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. 3: 10).

Then Moses prayed for a further revelation of the majesty and glory of God, saying, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." After he had followed divine instructions in carving two tables of stone, to take the place of the ones that he had broken, with the Ten Commandments written on them, God appeared to him in an extraordinary manifestation of supernal glory.

With the celestial afterglow of that transcendent experience lingering in his heart, he returned to his people. In his soul he knew that he would never be the same man after that visit with God, but he was not conscious of any change in his outward appearance. But the people noticed it at once. They always notice the change that genuine prayer makes in a person. The man of God may pray in secret, but he cannot keep secret the fact that he prays. The light of God's presence within will illumine the countenance without.

II. ERECTING THE TABERNACLE

One of the most pathetic parts of the incident of the golden calf was that while the people were donating their jewels to make a heathen image their God was instructing Moses in the plans and specifications for building the Tabernacle, where they might assemble themselves for worship and prayer. The execution of those plans was interrupted by that deplorable lapse and its aftermath, but with all of that out of the way, their leader was ready to bring them to the appointed task.

The Tabernacle and Ark were to be provided out of the voluntary offerings that the people would bring. "Every man whose heart maketh him willing" was to

bring an offering. Skilled workmen were chosen to do the delicate work, and to supervise the labor of the others. The designs were wrought out carefully and all the parts and the fastenings and couplings were made separately and brought to Moses. Then on an appointed day the parts were assembled and the Tabernacle and altars erected. It must have been a glorious day for the nation, when all the people co-operated in erecting the house of worship. And it was a marvelous exhibition of Moses' ability to organize and control his people.

What is the significance of the Tabernacle for Israel at this period? There are at least three definite answers that may easily be found in the Scripture account. In the first place, it signified a step forward in the development of the religious consciousness of the nation. When they left Egypt the cloud was a temporary manifestation of the presence of God to them. But now the Tabernacle indicates that God dwells with them and is accessible to all. Formerly he came down on the mountain and spoke to them through Moses, but now the house erected to the worship of God indicates that he is also with them and a part of them, the very center of their national life.

In the second place, it signified that it was the will of Jehovah that there should be a central place of worship for all the people. There would remain certain forms of family worship conducted in the tents of the people, but all of that should be subordinate to the worship that they should render to God as a people. This gave them religious unity and solidarity, prevented disintegration of their faith, and provided a means of preserving the revelation that God had given to them. The Tabernacle was the forerunner of the Temple, built in Solomon's day.

The third significance of the Tabernacle is that it became for Moses the substitute for Mount Sinai. Hitherto he had spent much time on the mountain in prayer, receiving instructions from God for the people. Henceforth, he is to commune with God in the Tabernacle, in

the midst of the camp. From now on to the end of his life he is to divide his time largely between talking with God inside the Tabernacle and talking to the people before it.

III. THE PRIESTHOOD ESTABLISHED UNDER AARON

With the provision of the Tabernacle as the central place of worship the need for an established priesthood to minister there was recognized at once. In fact, along with the instructions for the Tabernacle and Ark given on Sinai, Moses received directions for choosing, equipping and consecrating a class of priests who should be ready for the first service, and who should be the beginning of the order of priests to serve in Israel perpetually.

In all of the experiences of Israel to this point, Aaron, Moses' older brother by three years (see Ex. 7: 7), has taken a subordinate place. But now he is given a permanent position of prominence, for he is to be the high priest, and his sons are to minister with him (Ex. 28: 1). The work of the two brothers becomes definitely divided. Moses is to remain the chief leader of the people in all things, and Aaron is to have the burden of caring for the regular sacrifices and services. Here we see the beginning of the two orders of religious leaders in Israel, that figure so largely in later history—the prophets following after Moses as interpreters of the law and spokesmen of Jehovah for the nation, and the priests following after Aaron as ministers in the ritual of worship.

All the men of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of Moses and Aaron, were appointed to assist Aaron and his sons in the care of the Tabernacle and the daily services there. Ever after this the Levites were recognized as the servants of the people at the central shrine, and the descendants of Aaron were the priests. They were to devote all their time to maintaining the religious services.

But how were they to be supported with the necessities of life? Certainly they were not left to chance,

or doomed to poverty. The offerings that were brought by the people to the Tabernacle were to be taken by the priests. Only certain parts of the animals were used in the offerings, and the other parts that were edible were used for food by the priests. The tithes of increase were given by all the people to the Levites, who in turn gave a tithe of all that they received to the priests. In addition to all of this, there was the atonement money of half a shekel that every man twenty years old and over was required to give.

It can readily be seen that as Israel prospered the priests and Levites would benefit in proportion. There is little wonder that in the time of Jesus the priests were a wealthy class.

IV. OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES

The sacrifices prescribed in the Book of Leviticus are the offerings of a saved people in worship and praise; not to secure redemption, but to express gratitude for it; not the sprinkled blood to redeem, but offerings to meet the needs of a saved people in their approaches to God their Saviour. The principle of the offering in general is devotion of man to God expressed in an outward act. In the offering man gives something of real value, thus testifying to the earnestness of his action. The offering represented the offerer, and in many cases was regarded as a substitute for him.

What was the purpose of each of the offerings? This may best be seen if we group them into two classes. The first includes the burnt-offering (chapter 1), meal-offering (chapter 2), and the peace-offering or thank-offering (chapter 3). All of these were presented on the brazen altar within the court of the Tabernacle, and sin is not suggested in connection with them. It is the faithful Israelite seeking to express his devotion to Jehovah with an acceptable offering. It is an act of worship. The second class includes the sin and trespass

offerings (chapters 4 and 5), and here the sinner comes confessing his sin and seeking forgiveness.

What sins were to be expiated with such offerings? That question draws our attention to the fundamental distinction with reference to sins that runs throughout the ritual of the covenant. Two classes of sins were recognized: sins of weakness or ignorance, sins committed unwittingly or unintentionally; and sins of purpose and of premeditation, or sins of rebellion against the God of their covenant. For the first class an atonement was provided, but there was no sacrifice prescribed for the sins of the second class. The priests were required to make atoning offerings for themselves and then for the people, and individual Israelites conscious of having committed sins, brought their offerings, confessing their sins (Lev. 5: 5).

The tenth day of the seventh month was designated as the annual Day of Atonement, when all the people would present themselves to God through the priests for cleansing from sin. At that time, and only at that time, would the high priest enter the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle. Having first made an offering for himself and the other priests for the atonement of their sins, he then offered a sacrifice for the people, that the blood might be a sign of their atonement and forgiveness. Having completed the blood-offering, a goat, over whose head the sins of the people were confessed, was turned loose into the wilderness, symbolizing the fact that God had removed the sins of the people.

What provision was made for the other class of sins—the sins of rebellion? No sacrifice is prescribed in the ritual of the covenant for such sins. But to understand that we must remember that the fundamental condition of the whole covenant, upon which all the sacrifices are based, is faith in God and obedience to his will. Wilful sins violated that fundamental principle, and automatically rendered the sinner outside the covenant, and so beyond the reach of the sacrificial system that Jehovah

provided for his people who would seek diligently to do his will.

Was there no way for sinners guilty of such sins of rebellion to secure forgiveness? Their only hope was to plead the mercy of Jehovah. In two different instances God heard the prayer of Moses on behalf of his sinful people (Ex. 32: 7-14; Num. 12: 9-14). Jehovah revealed himself to Moses in the mount as a "God merciful and gracious . . . forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex. 34: 6, 7).

V. WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

The Israelites had now been around Sinai a little more than a year, and the time had been crowded with instruction from Jehovah through Moses concerning the welding of the people into the nation of God's choice. With the foundation of their national life now well laid, what should be their next experience? A movement of the cloud over the Tabernacle indicated that it was God's will that they should prepare to take up the march again toward the Promised Land. Moses tried to persuade his brother-in-law, Hobab, to go with them as a guide, for he knew the wilderness paths. He refused at first, but evidently yielded and went with them (Judges 1: 16; 4: 11).

Had the year at Sinai effected a change in the temperament of the people? Moses might well have started on this new part of their journey trusting fervently that they had outgrown their habit of complaining at every hardship. But if he cherished such a hope it was blasted during the first days of travel. They murmured against God and the fire of Jehovah burned in the camp until they cried out to Moses, who prayed for them and the fire abated (Num. 11: 1-3).

When the burden of leading the people grew heavy again Moses was told to choose seventy elders to stand by him and help him (Num. 11: 16ff). The people moved along further, and when their meat supply gave out the

quails were sent to them again, but this time a plague broke out among them to rebuke them for their greed (Num. 11).

Surely Moses had enough trouble without adding family quarrels! Nevertheless such trouble came in the jealousy of Miriam and Aaron with respect to the successes of their younger brother. Jehovah defended Moses to the brother and sister and his wrath was manifested against them in the leprosy that came upon Miriam, indicating that she had probably been the instigator of the trouble. But Aaron interceded to Moses, and Moses prayed to God for his sister, and her disease was healed. He was different from his brother and sister in the matter of jealousy as his treatment of Eldad and Medad showed (Num. 11: 26-30).

When they were encamped at Kadesh they were very near the border of the Promised Land. How should they enter it and possess it? The first task would be to inform themselves concerning the condition of the land and the inhabitants, and then they would be able to map out a plan of conquest and a route to be followed. Accordingly twelve spies were chosen, a man from each tribe, and sent to reconnoiter and study the land and the people (Num. 13).

After forty days they returned, bringing glowing reports of the country and samples of the fruit growing there; but ten of them were afraid of the inhabitants. All of the enthusiasm and faith of Caleb and Joshua fell on deaf ears, for the people believed the ten fearful spies. And their fear led them to their greatest national crisis. They murmured and talked rebellion, proposing to elect a leader in the place of Moses and return to Egypt. Then Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb fell down before them, pleading with them to turn from their evil thoughts and not rebel against Jehovah. But they grumbled all the more and threatened to stone Moses and the other three with him. It was indeed a crisis for

Israel as well as for Moses. What if they had been allowed to follow out their plans?

But once again Jehovah intervened. The threatened uprising was quelled, and Moses the magnanimous prayed for the forgiveness of the people who threatened to stone him. Here again he is the prophet of the type of Christ. His prayer was answered and the people were pardoned, but for their faithlessness they were condemned to wander in the wilderness until all the men from twenty years of age and up, who had feared to follow the Lord, had died. It would be necessary to rear a generation of men in the hard life of the wilderness before they would be strong enough to face the task of possessing the land.

Nearly forty years of wandering! It is a pathetic story. Death and mourning, murmurings, rebellions, and plagues make up the long and dreary story. One day it is defeat in battle, another it is the rebellion of Korah, yet again it is a plague.

The only advantage to come to them in all the years of aimless wandering in the wilderness was some further instruction in the law of Jehovah and in the proper conduct of services by the priests and Levites, indicating that Moses made good use of the time that the people wasted. While they marked time, getting nowhere in their journey, he prayed and studied and wrote, thus making real progress in the purpose of God for his life. It may be that he wrote the main part of the Pentateuch during these years of wandering.

At the beginning of the fortieth year after they left Egypt they came again to Kadesh-Barnea. Here Miriam, their sweet singer, died and they mourned for her (Num. 20).

And how has Moses held up under the strain of these forty years of trying experiences? Nearly every day they have brought to him their individual problems and their complaints as a nation. He has been governor, judge, preacher and pastor for them, as well as military strate-

gist, protector of health, and supervisor of food supplies. Day in and day out they have nagged him. It is no wonder to us that his patience gave way. In a fit of anger he sinned against Jehovah, Aaron participating with him in the sin. They were forgiven; nevertheless their sin disqualified them for entrance into the Promised Land (Num. 20: 2-13).

Shortly after this Aaron died at the age of one hundred and twenty-three, and Eleazar, his son, became high priest in his stead (Num. 20: 22-29; 33: 38, 39).

When the fiery serpents came among them and many of the people died, Moses was told to erect the brazen serpent and the plague was stayed by the power of God in answer to his servant's prayer. It was the type of the offering of Christ on the cross (John 3: 14).

After the experience with Balak and Balaam (Num. 22-24), and the sin of the people before Baal-peor, followed by the zealous intervention of Phinehas and the covenant of an everlasting priesthood in him (Num. 25) and a second numbering of the people (Num. 26), Moses was warned of his approaching death (Num. 27), and Joshua was chosen as his successor.

VI. MOSES' FAREWELL MESSAGES AND DEATH

Moses was now approaching the close of his career. Twice in recent months the shadow of death had fallen across his path, first in the going of Miriam and then of Aaron four or five months later. Added to that was the other burden of sorrow in knowing that he would not be permitted to go with his people into the Land of Promise. He had entreated Jehovah to let him go over into the land across the Jordan, but his request had been denied, and the Lord had said to him that he should not ask it again. He was permitted, however, to view the country from Pisgah's height (Deut. 3: 23-28).

In the last six weeks of his life he called the people together on stated occasions to hear what he would have to say to them. He knew that they would be his last

words to them, and the people probably sensed it too. It must have been an inspiring scene: the old patriarch leaning on his staff with one hand while the other gestured toward the Promised Land and their future, the gentle breeze waving his snow-white beard and hair, while the people gaze upon him and listen to him entranced with his every word. He is an old man, yet he is vigorous and alert in mind and body. He had been their deliverer, law-giver, and judge, but now he is their teaching prophet. What he says to them is by way of interpretation of their past experiences and prediction of what they might expect in the future, with warnings and admonitions mingled throughout.

The Book of Deuteronomy comprises three main addresses, the delivery of the law to the priests, the charge to Joshua and the great leader's farewell song and blessing, and a brief statement concerning his death.

The first address (1 to 4) is mainly introductory, consisting of a brief rehearsal of the journey from Sinai to Kadesh, and then the wanderings in the wilderness before their second arrival at Kadesh.

The second (5 to 26) gives some practical expositions of the law. He interprets all of it on the basis of love. They must love Jehovah and be jealous of his honor, and zealous to obey him diligently in all things. The fourth and fifth verses of the sixth chapter early became a prominent part of their ritual. It may be heard today chanted frequently in the regular services of the Jewish synagogues and temples.

As he is teaching them now he tells them that they must teach their children the significance of their history as a people and the precepts of their God given at Sinai (chapter 6), and urges upon all of them the solemn duty of studying the law (chapter 11). And he tells them that God will raise up before them a prophet like unto himself, unto whom they must hearken. We remember that Jesus told the Jews of his day: "For had ye believed

Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me" (John 5: 46).

The third address (27 to 30) is occupied with instructions for the renewing of the covenant after they had entered the land beyond the Jordan. Here, as throughout all of the discourses, he admonishes them to remember always to do God's will and keep his law, promising them that if they will follow in that path God will bless them and keep them by his power, but that if they forsake him and his ways he will deliver them over to their enemies. Let the reader pause just here and read the fearful consequences of disobedience that are pronounced in the twenty-eighth chapter.

Moses the prophet is speaking. The legislator and the judge, the deliverer and the historian, fade into the background and in the soft glow of the eventide of his life he is pre-eminently the prophet. The many revelations from God mingle with his emotions and flow in the alembic of one hundred and twenty years of experience. The shadows of sorrow and loneliness are blended with the scarlet flames of the burning bush and the brilliant light of Sinai when God walked by, as the masterful prophet with an inspired artistry of words paints scene after scene on the immortal canvas of the souls of his people. Now he is piercing the law with spiritual intuition and interpreting it as love; again with inspired prescience he is foretelling their future.

Did he hit the mark when he attempted to predict their future? When he warned them of the evils of idolatry he put his finger upon their besetting sin through the centuries until the Captivity. And when he admonished them against self-glorification he touched upon their besetting characteristic through the centuries after the return from exile. He told them that the only safeguard against all these dangers was to keep the spiritual fires burning in an abiding and singular devotion to Jehovah their God.

His discourses ended, he finished his writing and delivered all the documents to the priests, with the instruction to read the whole law before the people every seven years (Deut. 31: 9-13). Then he gave his charge to Joshua (31: 23). Only one thing remained to be done before he would be ready to take his final departure: he wanted to gather the people together once more and give them a poem of praise to Jehovah that they might sing throughout their history, and then bestow his patriarchal blessing upon them. This he did with a display of poetical genius that fully matched his demonstration of other remarkable talents. (Read again Deuteronomy 32 and 33.)

His work was done, his last instructive and inspiring messages had been delivered. It only remained now for him to make his departure. How would he leave them? Would they gather around him and weep on his neck seeking to make a last atonement for the many times that they had made his work unnecessarily hard with their complaining and unfaith? Would they watch him then as he went slowly up the mountain for the last time waving to him as he passed each turn in the path?

So far as we are informed by the account there was no formal leave-taking. Probably early one morning, before the coming of day had waked the sleeping host of Israel Moses took Joshua and started up Mount Nebo, and as he came to the first high promontory he paused and looked down upon the camp. His people were just beginning to stir about with the morning duties, and as he looked upon them he put his hand on Joshua's shoulder and told him to go down and announce to the people that this was to be his death-day, and that they would not see his face again.

By the time they received the word from Joshua, Moses was on the top of Pisgah. As the morning sun bathed the land below him in dazzling light, God let Moses feast his eyes upon the land that was to be his people's possession. Hour after hour he looked through

the hot tears of disappointment, then as the sun passed its meridian glory, his disappointment gave way to the peace and contentment of joyful resignation to the will of God, and as the slanting rays of the setting sun sent shadows lengthening across the hills and valleys, he sensed the eternal significance of the work that God had enabled him to do. In the quiet and beauty of his last earthly eventide, he walked with God to his eternal home.

"So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. 34: 5, 6).

QUESTIONS

- Why did the Israelites want an image of a calf?
- Why did Aaron consent? Who led the music and dancing?
- What did Moses do when Jehovah became angry?
- How did Moses show his anger when he came back to camp?
- Then what did Moses do?
- What is Moses' spiritual reward for his intercession?
- When did Moses get the instructions for building the Tabernacle and the Ark?
- How was the material provided?
- What was the significance of the Tabernacle at this period?
- Why was Aaron chosen as priest?
- What two religious orders are now established?
- What provisions were made for the support of the priests and Levites?
- What is the general significance of the offerings in Leviticus?
- What is the purpose of each of the main offerings?
- What were the two classes of sins?
- What provision was made for their atonement?
- Tell of the Day of Atonement.
- Where did Israel go from Sinai?
- What happened when the spies gave their report?

Why did they have to wander so long before entering the Promised Land?

What happened during those years of wandering? What was Moses doing?

Describe Moses' sin and the consequences in his life.

Tell of the death of Miriam and Aaron.

Tell about the fiery serpents.

When did Moses deliver the addresses recorded in Deuteronomy?

Tell what is contained in each.

Were his predictions as to the sins of the people accurate?

How did he take his departure?

Where did he die?

OUTLINE

CHAPTER IX

Exodus 24 to 40; Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

INTERCEDING FOR ISRAEL—32 to 34

Worship of the calf

Jehovah's wrath and Moses' prayer

Moses' wrath, followed by another prayer

Face-to-face talk

The shining face

ERECTING THE TABERNACLE—24 to 27; 30 to 31; 35 to 40

Provided out of willing gifts

Significance of the Tabernacle

PRIESTHOOD UNDER AARON—28, 29, 39

Division of labor between the brothers

Two orders of religious leaders established

Appointment of the Levites

Support of the priests and Levites

OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICE—Leviticus

Significance of the offerings in Leviticus

The purpose of the individual offerings

Two classes of sins

The Day of Atonement

WILDERNESS WANDERINGS—Numbers

The Israelites move from Sinai
The elders help
Family jealousy
Report of the spies
Dreary wanderings
Sin of Moses

MOSES' FAREWELL MESSAGES AND DEATH—Deuteronomy

Denied the privilege of entering the Promised Land
First address
Second address
Third address
Great prophet
Departure and death

PART II

FROM JOSHUA TO DAVID

CHAPTER I

JOSHUA

Scripture to be studied: Joshua 1-6, 23, 24

Biography is at once the most interesting and most inspiring class of literature. Biography is no less attractive because it is in the Bible; on the contrary, biblical characters excel all others in their universal appeal. From such lives has been drawn the inspiration that has built civilizations, and to the qualities of such personalities boys and girls and men and women have been pointed through the centuries; we are to study lives that molded the opinion of their day and projected themselves into the life of succeeding ages. Ours, then, is a delightful task and a glorious responsibility; we shall see to it that the important facts of each life are brought out, but we shall be careful not to allow mere facts to cover up the romance and thrill of these world figures. Happy the teacher who succeeds in making these great men and women live before the members of his class.

Our series opens with Joshua, one of the great military heroes and executives of all time; we shall be interested in this stalwart character as he walks along in the purpose of God for his life. Let the reader see the power of God in a human life surrendered to him.

I. A LEADER IN TRAINING

Citizens of a country that holds open to its lowliest people the highest positions of honor and trust and delights to place in authority many who have been denied the so-called advantages of life despise no man for his humble origin. In the absence of positive records (for the Bible is silent on the point) we establish by inference

the facts of the early life of Joshua. It is practically certain that he was born in the land of Goshen of parents who were held in slavery by the Egyptians. His youth, then, was not unlike that of the average slave lad, and offered no more promise. Be careful how you walk about among the underprivileged; you may meet one of God's noblemen.

No matter how one gets it, discipline is indispensable to the growing of a great character. As strange as it may seem, human experience and observation establish the fact that we owe more to adversity than to prosperity. New psychology to the contrary notwithstanding, hardness provides a training that stands in the testing times. The boy Joshua grew up in a godly home, was exposed to the rigors of adversity's exacting discipline, and never learned that one could give to proper authority anything but cheerful obedience. Not such a bad school in which to train a leader, do you think?

II. A LEADER DEVELOPED

It is not surprising that Moses, upon entering his work as deliverer, should have been attracted by this strong young man, now perhaps forty years of age, and should have attached Joshua to himself in such a way that he became known as Moses' minister (Joshua 1: 1). Joshua was more associate or assistant than servant, as brief reference to the relationships reveals. Joshua successfully led the forces of Israel against the Amalekites in Rephidim (Ex. 17: 8-16); Joshua accompanied Moses into the mount of God (Ex. 24: 13); Joshua remained constantly in the tabernacle while Moses went out into the camp (Ex. 33: 11). Who will estimate the value to this future leader of these intimate contacts with the incomparable Moses?

Complying with Jehovah's instructions, Moses selected twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan. It is natural that he named Joshua in that number. Everybody knows the results of the search of forty days: the enthusiastic

and unanimous report concerning the richness of the land and the ample exhibits of its fruitfulness. There was also practical unanimity as to the nature and size of the inhabitants. Sharp division arose as to the wisdom of going further in view of the obstacles mentioned. The whole congregation cried out against Moses and Aaron, lamenting the fact that they had not died in Egypt.

This was Joshua's opportunity, and right courageously did he seize it. With his colleague, Caleb, he stood like a stone wall against the clamor of the multitude and insisted that they were well able to possess the land, especially since God would give the land to them. Only the inexperienced treat this incident lightly. It takes real courage to stand against a mob driven by hysteria. All honor to the few, too few, men in positions of representative authority who stand for the right in the face of a clamorous public. Popular frenzy is entirely too fickle to be depended upon as a guide to conduct. Joshua won his spurs in that crisis, and there was never after any doubt as to his ability to lead men in the fear of God alone.

III. A LEADER ORDAINED

When the Lord made it clear to Moses that the latter's days were coming to a close and that he would not be permitted to enter Canaan, Moses begged God to select a man who would go in and out before the congregation that the people might not be as sheep without a shepherd. The Lord heard the prayer and directed Moses to lay hands on Joshua, who was qualified in spirit to lead the people.

Moses followed specifically the instructions of Jehovah and brought Joshua before the priest for consecration, and the priest presented him to the congregation for approval. At once were expressed popular appreciation of the leadership of Moses and general approval of his wisdom in the choice of his successor. Thus publicly and formally Moses' successor was set apart for his work. The leader awaits his task.

IV. A LEADER COMMISSIONED

There is something beautifully tender in the reference to Moses. The world calls him the lawgiver, but the Scriptures magnify him simply as "the servant of the Lord." Three times is he called by that title immediately after his death. Title enough, don't you think? Moses enjoyed unusual distinction in that, although one hundred and twenty years old, his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated; furthermore, God himself buried him and kept secret the place of his burial. "Moses my servant is dead," the Lord began in addressing Joshua. The succession was established, and not one knew better than Joshua the difficult task of following Moses. But he was not following Moses; he was following God even as Moses had followed him, and was prepared to look to God for leadership in his heavy responsibilities.

The command to Joshua was brief and to the point, as all commands should be to capable people, and as all of God's commands are, because with his commands goes the promise of the power to execute them. Some of us recall the command to Admiral Dewey,—“Find the Spanish fleet and sink it.” That's all Dewey had to do, and he did it. God told Joshua to take all the people across Jordan into the land that he had given them. He reminded him, however, that the land could not be actually their possession until they had set foot on it: the gift had no strings on it, but the Israelites must make it their own before they could possess it.

Along with the command, God exhorted Joshua to be strong and of good courage and to follow the example of Moses, assuring him that no man would be able to resist him all the days of his life, and promising that he, Jehovah, would never fail him. One cannot imagine a more favorable inauguration of a really great leader. In one particular, the Lord was very specific; he urged Joshua not to allow the book of the law to depart out of his mouth, but to meditate on it day and night, for that was the road to real happiness.

V. A LEADER IN ACTION

Joshua got on the job at once. Mighty events follow in rapid succession, only a few of which can be mentioned in this section. Two secret spies were sent to Jericho. They were befriended by Rahab, and in turn they promised safety to her and her family after they had taken possession of the land. In orderly, stately fashion the congregation, led by the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant, crossed, on dry land, the Jordan, the waters of which were rolled up as walls on either side. In honor of this passage a stone memorial was erected.

The actual conquest of Canaan began with the fall of Jericho, the details of which are too familiar to require emphasis. Of course, there were other engagements more or less serious, in all of which, as at Jericho, the plain command of God was followed literally. In connection with and following the conquest came the distribution of the promised land among the tribes. In this service the statesmanship of Joshua marks him one of the great constructive leaders of all time.

But the curtain must fall on this great life. Life's retrospect for Joshua is golden; there are no disappointments. With his task completed, he recalls that everywhere and at all times God has been faithful; he reminds his people of God's goodness, and urges them to keep and practice the law given by Moses, and to fear God and serve him in sincerity and in truth. Quietly the son of Nun, called now "the servant of the Lord," passed away, and the inspired writer says that Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and of the elders that overlived Joshua.

VI. SUGGESTIVE

From such a rich life there are many things for us; we stress only three. Piety needs to be redeemed for most of us from a sentimental mixture of emotion and superstition to a deliberate recognition of God's presence and power and an intelligent effort to serve him. Joshua

was one of the most pious men in history. His piety consisted in earnest recognition of God's will and whole-hearted determination to carry it out; in this he was pre-eminently successful—and yet, the popular mind does not associate him with the great spiritual leaders. Why not?

Not once in his busy life is there any evidence of taking personal credit for anything that he has done; always it is the Lord that hath done it,—and these words are spoken in such a manner as to leave no doubt about the sincerity of Joshua. We like that. If we are trusting God for leadership and power, why not acknowledge him when achievement results? Too often, we give no thought to God in the practical affairs of life so long as we are getting on fairly well; we turn to him readily in the hour of difficulty or trial, and when relief comes we forget him and claim the credit for ourselves. Mighty man of war, commander of armies, conqueror of cities, organizer of society,—Joshua was greatest in his humble acknowledgment of God as the explanation of all that he had been able to accomplish.

What is success? Many and varied are the answers to that question, most of them emphasizing the financial or material. Jehovah promised Joshua "good success," and on some very definite conditions. Joshua met those conditions, and his life illustrates the meaning of the expression. The conditions were daily meditation on God's Book that he might practice all that is written therein. His "good success" consisted in a prosperous way and an influence that lasted beyond his own generation; in fact, that influence is felt today, nearly 3,500 years after Joshua. We wonder if that is not success, to live triumphantly and to leave an influence for good that refuses to die?

QUESTION-ANSWER

If the students of this chapter can be induced to read the Book of Joshua as a preparation for this study, a long step toward effective teaching will have been taken.

From a wealth of material we venture to offer the following questions for actual use or suggestion:

1. *Joshua's Early Life.* What do you know of Joshua's family? Where was he born? Under what conditions was he brought up? What were his early associations with Moses?

2. *Joshua's Apprenticeship.* What were his services as a spy? What was the penalty imposed on Israel for failure to adopt the minority report of the spies? Whom did Joshua obey?

3. *Joshua in Action.* How did Joshua's army get across the Jordan? Describe the capture of Jericho. How long did it take Joshua to conquer Canaan? Name three or four interesting incidents connected with the conquest. What was Joshua's task after the conquest? What is the substance of Joshua's farewell to his people?

4. *Joshua's Character.* Name three outstanding characteristics of Joshua and illustrate each one by some experience of his life. How do you account for Joshua's success? Is there need for Joshuas today?

REPORT-CONFERENCE

The successful use of this method will be conditioned on pretty fair knowledge of the Book of Joshua on the part of every member of the class. In advance the teacher may assign the entire book for study by the class and may make topical assignments based upon the Book of Joshua. By thorough preparation, which the teacher will guard carefully, the life of Joshua may be covered pretty thoroughly in one class period.

The following are some topics suggested for assignment: Joshua's Ancestry and Birth, Joshua's Service Under Moses, The Lord's Commission to Joshua, Achan's Sin, Conquest of Ai, Service of the Gibeonites, The Cities of Refuge, Joshua's Last Charge to Israel, The Elements of Strength in Joshua's Character, The Source of Joshua's Power, Joshua's Message for Today.

Short, snappy, well-prepared reports should be followed by very brief discussion directed by the teacher to the necessary interpretation of the study and its application to modern life.

BLACKBOARD-DISCUSSION

This method may commend itself in the study of topical subjects; in the case of a study of the life of a man it may present the whole story at a glance, and it admits of as much elaboration as time will permit. Our headlines are chosen from the Book of Joshua and express the words of the two partners in the achievements therein recorded. The top line is the injunction of Jehovah to the faithful of all time. Strength and courage are essential to victorious living in any age, and can be exercised only by those who are conscious of the presence of God in their lives. The bottom line is one of the finest utterances that ever fell from the lips of man, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." That has iron in it. How badly our age needs men who are convinced that they do not have to be popular nor rich nor prominent, but they do have to stand true to honest convictions, though the heavens fall. One of the saddest commentaries on public men of today is the readiness with which convictions of a lifetime may be set aside in response to the demand of expediency.

GOD'S WORD TO A TIMID AGE: "BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE"

I. A LEADER IN TRAINING

1. Born in Slavery
2. Disciplined in Adversity
2. Seasoned in Obedience

II. A LEADER DEVELOPED (Num. 13, 14)

1. As Moses' Attendant
2. As Careful Scout
3. As Minority Reporter

III. A LEADER ORDAINED (Num. 27: 16-23)

1. In Answer to Prayer
2. Priestly consecration
3. Popular Acclamation

IV. A LEADER COMMISSIONED (Joshua 1: 1-9)

1. Succession Established
2. Command Issued
3. Assurance Given

V. A LEADER IN ACTION (Joshua 1: 10 to 24: 31)

1. Land Surveyed and Entered
2. Conquest and Division
3. Retrospect and Exhortation

VI. SUGGESTIVE

1. Intelligent Piety
2. Loyal Acknowledgment
3. Good Success

"AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE
THE LORD"

CHAPTER II

CALEB

Scripture to be studied: Numbers 13, 14; Joshua 14

We pay high tribute to these two contemporaries in selecting both Joshua and Caleb for special study. They first appear as colleagues on an important commission, next they are represented as commander and subordinate. But throughout their lives they maintained the most cordial feelings of friendship and loyalty toward each other, and developed pretty much the same personal characteristics. There was little difference in their ages, but we have always thought of Caleb as the younger and more impulsive of the two. The scriptural treatment of Caleb is even more scant than that of Joshua. We can only gather up the fragments from the sacred record and inject supplementary material as the context seems to warrant it.

I. INTRODUCING CALEB

We first meet Caleb at the close of the march from Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea. He was the son of Jephunneh (his father apparently having no other distinction) and belonged to the tribe of Judah, David's tribe, Christ's tribe. As a representative of his tribe he went with the eleven representatives of the other tribes to investigate Canaan and report on both its resources and its facilities for resisting conquest. The work of the committee was exceptionally well done, and there was no difference of opinion as to the facts disclosed by the forty-day investigation. The land was exceedingly productive, as samples of the products would prove; the cities were walled, many of them; the natives were physical giants, towering in

strength, and, to the big majority of the committee, made the Israelites look like grasshoppers in comparison.

The commission divided, however, as to the ability to conquer Canaan. The report of ten drew a very dark picture as it contrasted the numerous and strong inhabitants within their fortified cities with the military unpreparedness of the invading party. This was Caleb's opportunity. He and Joshua prepared a minority report, and he urged its adoption. In everyday language he insisted that God wanted to give Canaan to Israel, and would help them to possess it if they would not rebel against him. His glorious words, "We are able," ring out with heartening thrill through the centuries. But the people yelled him down, and condemned themselves to destruction and their children to another generation of wandering before entering the promised land.

Caleb was thirty-eight years ahead of his folks. This is the only time that Caleb appears as a leader, and the occasion is a most favorable introduction. He dared to be in the minority, to resist the anger of a frenzied mob of cowards, and to stand for what he knew absolutely to be right. Foolish, did you say? Well, Caleb and Joshua were the only adults in the company to enter Canaan. Sometimes people need to be saved from their fool selves; in such cases, happy are they if they have representatives strong enough to oppose popular clamor and stand,—not for re-election but for righteousness.

During the rest of his days Caleb served as assistant to Joshua, Moses' successor. In this capacity he confirmed the good opinion we formed of him at the time of his introduction. To accept gladly a subordinate position, and to perform faithfully and loyally every task without the slightest suspicion of a thought or of a desire to supplant his chief, is to be a real man. Good followers are just as essential as good leaders. We smile at the fellow who says that in all his travels he never met a Confederate veteran who served as a private; but our religious work is often hampered by desire for recognition.

We need more men and women in our churches who specialize in doing what no one else wants to do. Caleb was a great joy to Joshua and to God because he "wholly followed the Lord."

After such a record we are not surprised that he entered old age in full possession of all of his faculties, and without a single regret to interrupt the happy unrolling of memory's scroll. It is a wonderful thing that man can so largely determine the nature of reflective equipment for advanced years. Hats off to triumphant old age!

II. POSSESSING CANAAN

After the death of Moses, at the end of the extended period of wandering which the cowardice of the Israelites had drawn, it fell to the lot of Joshua, with the able assistance of Caleb, to lead the people across Jordan into Canaan and to carry out the instructions of Jehovah in the conquest of Canaan. Title to Canaan had already been given by Jehovah, but it had to be validated by the destruction of the inhabitants and by the actual occupation of the land. We resist the urge to draw upon our ignorance for an explanation of God's order for the destruction of the nations. We are happy to believe that God knew what he was about, and do not find it necessary to reinforce his judgment with the reasoning of man. The titles were cleared by divine decree and by human occupation.

We cannot go into the details of the division of the territory. Suffice it to say, that the allotments or inheritances were given out by lot by Joshua in conference with Eleazar, the high priest, and the heads of the tribes. It is remarkable that no dissatisfaction arose as a result of decisions in such important matters, and such a fact is a tribute to the quality of leadership exhibited by Joshua and his associates. The right of tribal groups to hold their property seemed to depend on their ability to dispossess former occupants and resist all efforts to re-occupy.

III. A COMPELLING REQUEST

The heart of the historical narrative has to do with the subject of this division of the outline. Caleb is celebrating his eighty-fifth birthday, and he is doing it with the longest speech of his life so far as the records go. He comes before his leader and friend—for he has so served Joshua that the relationship of superior and subordinate has become that of friends—with a specific request. He wants an exception made in his case in the allotment of land. With the enthusiasm of reflecting age, he recalls the promise that God made through Moses to Joshua and to him that day forty-five years ago, that the land on which his feet had trodden should be his inheritance and his children's forever; he reviews the evidence of God's continued favor upon him as witnessed by his advanced but very vigorous years, he insists upon his fitness for war, even as when together they began their exploration of Canaan. With this preliminary background, he asks Joshua to give him Hebron for his inheritance, and promises with the help of the Lord to keep it clear of infesting Anakims.

It is particularly worthy of notice that Caleb was really asking for a chance to perform an important service to the nation by becoming responsible for a hazardous undertaking. Not infrequently rewards come in the form of greater trusts. The request, which might have been considered presumptuous in another, was made so frankly and with such evident merit that it seemed the natural thing to ask. You know men whose lives permit them to ask not only without offense but with positive assurance.

IV. THE FAITH KEPT

The Book says Joshua blessed Caleb when he had finished his speech. Fine old Joshua! Some one should do justice to the Joshua-Caleb friendship one of these days. Joshua listened with warming heart to the review of experiences that he had shared with his lifelong com-

rade. He remembered particularly Moses' solemn oath on that day on which the people rejected his and Caleb's report as to Caleb's inheritance, and immediately ratified Moses' promise by designating Hebron as Caleb's inheritance.

Thus Caleb came into possession of famous territory, nineteen miles from Jerusalem and thirteen miles from Bethlehem, the seat of Machpelah, sacred forever because of association with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah, and later to be distinguished as the royal residence of David and as the place where he was anointed king over all Israel.

V. SUGGESTIVE

The beauty of the study of biography lies in the fact that most any life contains qualities that will inspire to higher living or warn against a wasted life. Fortunately, the life of Caleb is inspirational only, and it is therefore both pleasurable and profitable to contemplate some Caleb qualities. Courage is certainly outstanding in his career: courage to accept appointment as scout, courage to face facts, courage to trust God against great odds, courage to champion his convictions against a bitterly hostile assembly, courage to keep resolute in the hour of defeat, courage to wait for his opportunity, courage to request a difficult task even in old age. Courage as the name would indicate, is a heart quality; it cannot be put on, it springs from within.

Another quality, of which courage is one expression, is loyalty. Caleb was loyal to his people in seeking their best interests always; he was loyal to his superiors in authority, carefully and efficiently executing every commission given him; he was loyal to his God, following him scrupulously at every turn in his life. Hear his own words, "I wholly followed the Lord my God" (Joshua 14: 8), and hear Jehovah's testimony, "He hath wholly followed the Lord" (Deut. 1: 36), and "My servant Caleb hath followed me fully" (Num. 14: 24).

These two qualities, with all that they imply, suggest a third, integrity. Caleb was a whole number; there were no question marks about him, no fractional compromise; Caleb was a man.

This life also illustrates the fact that what the unthinking are prone to consider a miracle or good fortune in a life may be nothing more than being ready. There is such a thing as a man making himself indispensable by his own preparation to meet a crisis. Caleb's success may be explained by the fact that he kept himself fit for the service that God required of him.

We will not want to let the curtain fall on this life without a moment's reflection on a serene old age such as Caleb experienced. All of us are a bit older than we used to be, and some of us are drawing pretty heavily upon life's experiences for food for reflection. What kind of food are we finding? Just exactly what we have stored up through years. In one of his novels Disraeli makes a character say, "Youth is a blunder, manhood is a struggle, and old age is a regret." Such observations may have been true of Disraeli's brilliant but rather checkered career, but for the correct life his sentiment should be changed to read, "Youth is opportunity, manhood is achievement, and old age is an holy memory." Why not? We covet for ourselves and for our thousands of readers the serene old age, the product of the Caleb life.

QUESTION-ANSWER

Teachers will not confine themselves to even the full chapters, Numbers 13 and Joshua 14, but will so frame the questions as to bring out all of the facts of Caleb's life, and to draw from it certain inspirational thoughts that will stimulate daily living. Again, we venture to list a group of questions which may prove at least suggestive, if no more practically useful:

1. *Caleb, the Youth.* Who was Caleb's father? To what tribe did he belong? What is Caleb's first appear-

ance in the narrative? What qualities as a spy did he show?

2. *Caleb, the Leader.* What can you say of his power of speech? How was his speech received? What penalty did the people bring upon themselves? What special reward was promised to Caleb? (Num. 14: 24.)

3. *Caleb, the Follower.* What special request did Caleb make of Joshua? Why? How did Joshua show his regard for Caleb? What is the substance of Caleb's last message? What complimentary references to Caleb does the Lord make? (Num. 14: 24; Deut. 1: 36.)

4. *Caleb, the Man.* What qualities of character are conspicuous in Caleb? What was the secret of his success? To what extent would you like to be like Caleb?

REPORT-CONFERENCE

The entire group should be asked to read Numbers 13 and 14, and Joshua 14, because these three chapters contain practically all that is known about Caleb. Each teacher will use his own method of getting this work under way, and of seeing that it has been done. As usual, in this method, personal assignments will be made in advance, and will be checked by the teacher before reports are due.

We suggest the following as suitable subjects: Caleb's Parentage, Caleb's Work as a Spy, The Minority Report, Joshua and Caleb, God's Estimate of Caleb, Historical Importance of Hebron, Reasons for Caleb's Special Request, Caleb's Qualities, The Character of Caleb Applied to Modern Life.

In the use of these or similar topics, the teacher will have opportunity to bring out the details of the life of Caleb, and through group discussion to apply its truths to the lives of the members of the group. Of course, every teacher will recognize that there is an art in conducting a profitable conference. The interests of members must be aroused to the point that they will be at home in the group discussions.

BLACKBOARD-DISCUSSION

In the use of this method it shall be our aim to present the life of Caleb as a unit, and to emphasize its outstanding characteristics without regard to chronology that his qualities may find acceptance with modern students. The top line of our outline reveals the secret of Caleb's victorious life; it also suggests that whoever follows the Lord wholly cannot fail. There is a message in that fact for every life today. Never, perhaps, in history was there as great opportunity for men who deliberately follow the Lord as this day presents. In the social life, in business, in politics, even in religion, the world waits for men and women with courage enough to follow Jesus, no matter where he leads. Surrender to expediency has all but taken possession of the leadership of the world. The bottom line is true as a practical proposition. There is such a thing as earning the right to make certain requests: Caleb had done that very thing. He had so lived, that no one saw any impropriety in the request or in its being granted. With these two lines in place, we present the lesson outline.

CALEB WHOLLY FOLLOWED THE LORD

- I. INTRODUCING CALEB (Num. 13, 14; Joshua 14)
 - 1. Courageous Representative
 - 2. Valiant Subordinate
 - 3. Triumphant Old Man
- II. POSSESSING CANAAN (Joshua 12-22)
 - 1. Titles Clear
 - 2. Allotments Made
 - 3. Test Applied
- III. A COMPELLING REQUEST (Joshua 14: 6-12)
 - 1. Exception Asked
 - 2. Basis of Request
 - (1) Ancient Promises
 - a. To Joshua and Caleb
 - b. To Caleb

- (2) Long Faithfulness
- (3) Ability to Conquer

IV. THE FAITH KEPT (Joshua 14: 13-15)

- 1. Moses Ratified
- 2. Joshua Pleased
- 3. Inheritance Given

V. SUGGESTIVE

- 1. Caleb Qualities
- 2. Miracle of Being Ready
- 3. Serene Old Age

CALEB'S LIFE GAVE HIM RIGHT TO MAKE DEMANDS

CHAPTER III

DEBORAH

Scripture to be studied: Judges 4 and 5

This chapter brings us to the discussion of the life and character of the first woman in history to occupy the position of ruler. When we remember that the date was around 1300 B.C., this fact alone becomes all the more remarkable. The women of the Orient were not (and are not yet) supposed to aspire to positions of leadership in civil or political matters. In our day of women governors, women Congressmen, women judges, women secretaries, and women ambassadors, we would not be surprised to see a woman in high executive position. But such a thing is surprising in the civilization of three thousand years ago. Human characters are products of their times oftener than they are the molders of their age. Deborah, the agent of God, must be studied in the light of her times. In an effort at practical application we shall seek to draw from her life some lessons that may make woman more sensitive to her serious obligations and man more appreciative of her genuine worth in big affairs.

I. A CONFUSED PERIOD

From Joshua to Eli and Samuel, a period of some two hundred and fifty years, Israel was without a truly national leader, and was subject to difficulties within and without. Repeatedly, the Book says, the people of God forgot him and the lessons of past misfortunes and yielded to the temptations of idolatry. But for the ease with which modern Christians forget God, it would be difficult to understand how it was possible for a people who had

such unmistakable and cumulative evidence of the reality of God and his grace and power to turn their backs repeatedly on God and go off after strange gods. But the record is clear and the evidence unmistakable. The Israelites simply would not learn by experience. You know, we are beginning to doubt that old saying, "Experience is a dear school, but fools will learn in no other." We are not certain that fools will learn in any school. At any rate, Israel hung up a good record for ignoring utterly the lessons of experience.

God in his mercy remembered his people even in their leaderless anxiety, and just about the time that their condition was becoming hopeless he raised up a judge who would so impress the people that they would be disposed to take him at face value, submit their problems to him and accept his decisions. The judges as a whole were people of superior ability, and it is everlastingly to the credit of the Israelites that they acquiesced in the judges' opinions and gave them an allegiance akin to that offered to their regular rulers.

Of course, the uncertain tenure and the more uncertain succession of the judges made for instability among the people. Too often the judges' influence died with them, and immediately upon the death of a judge a certain element of the people would throw off the restraints and turn to heathen gods. This practice was repeated so often that it threatened to become disastrous, and doubtless would have resulted in anarchy, if not checked. At this juncture, God always interfered and set in motion some heathen spoiler who would whip the people back to a remembrance of God. Time and again God permitted hostile nations to harass the land in order that he might prove Israel, to discover whether they would walk in his ways as their fathers had done. Thus Israel went through her "Iron Age," confusion following a more or less brilliant piece of service, the source and value of which rested largely upon the popular will. Israel's progress, then, was spasmodic, and the fact that

any progress at all was made can be attributed to the mercy and patience of God.

II. FIRST WOMAN RULER

It was in one of these periodic crises that Deborah appears. She is called a prophetess, and we know from the record that she wrote poetry. She was the wife of Lappidoth (his only distinction apparently), and she held court, as we would say, under a palm tree in the hill-country of Ephraim, and to her the Israelites came for judgment since she did not go on circuit as Samuel did.

Prophetesses are not unknown in the Scriptures. They were women who spoke for God, even as the prophets did. Perhaps the most distinguished of the prophetesses was Miriam, the sister of Moses; Huldah, in the reign of Josiah, served as prophetess; the four virgin daughters of Philip, the evangelist, prophesied; Anna who recognized the infant Jesus as the Messiah was a prophetess. Whether functioning publicly or not, godly women seem to excel men in their ability to find and interpret the will of God.

From her residence under the palm tree this strong woman dispensed justice and adjusted disputes. Most scholars think that her choice of location was significant, since the tree was held as sacred to the abode of a divinity that would make known his will through the prophetess. Be that as it may, Deborah was God's chosen means of making known his will to his people, and the agent through whom he worked in bringing deliverance from their harassing enemies. To the credit of the people, they accepted her judgments.

III. THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY

As punishment for their apostasy, God had sold the Israelites into the hand of Jabin, the king of Canaan, whose depredations among the people were terrible. He plundered their harvests, carried off their livestock, destroyed their homes, and spread distress throughout the

region. Sisera, the king's captain, was one of the mighty warriors of all time. He commanded a host of soldiers, and was feared particularly for his fleet of nine hundred chariots of iron. These were war chariots, open behind and carrying a driver, a warrior with his weapons of offense, and the warrior's shield-bearer; the chariot wheels may have been equipped with scythes that protruded from the sides and mowed down everything in their path. Obviously, this was a very formidable piece of equipment, but its practical use was limited to level stretches of country; it was of no value in the hill-country.

The Jabin-Sisera combination was enough to strike terror to the hearts of the prodigal Israelites, and they are ready again to listen to the word of God through his servant. Strange, isn't it, that men's hearts are more open to the voice of God in their adversities than when they are enjoying the prosperity of his blessings?

IV. A WOMAN'S STRATEGY

The time was ripe for Deborah to strike. She sought a leader from the region most sorely threatened by Jabin and Sisera, and summoned to her aid one Barak, whose name means "Lightning" and whose reputation for military prowess must have been considerable. He responded promptly, and she issued in the form of an inquiry God's command that he lead ten thousand men from the northern tribes, Naphtali and Zebulun, toward Mount Tabor as the rallying point for Israel's hosts. It seems in the last analysis that all of the tribes sent troops for the battle except Dan, Reuben, Gilead, and Asher; at least, Deborah in her song of thanksgiving reproaches these four tribes for their failure to send recruits. This fact reveals the lack of unity prevailing among the tribes, and the difficulty they had in making a common cause of a menace to one or more of the tribes—a situation not unlike that in the American colonies in the pre-revolutionary period.

By way of assurance, Deborah promises Barak to see to it that Sisera is drawn to the river Kishon, which rises near Tabor and flows through the plain of Esdraelon and empties into the Mediterranean, and is delivered into his hands. We have a suspicion that the first part of this promise impressed Barak a bit more than the latter part. In fact, he seems to have overlooked this definite statement that Sisera would be delivered into his hands. It never occurred to him to doubt Deborah's ability to produce Sisera in the plain; for it was well known that that gentleman needed no persuasion to take a position that promised the prospect of a battle.

With his mind, therefore, upon the immediate prospect of battle with Sisera, Barak refused to go unless Deborah would accompany him. We do not know any more about the reason for this decision than other writers, and we shall write less on this point. Since Deborah had planned the campaign and spoke with such positiveness, it is quite natural for Barak to conclude that he would feel much better if she were along; hence, his statement. Deborah promptly accepted his terms, but frankly told him that in making such a stipulation he would lose the honor of the victory, because Sisera would be delivered into the hands of a woman. Perhaps, Barak was not thinking much about the honors.

V. VICTORY COMPLETE

Esdraelon, Palestine's largest plain, already made famous as a world battleground by the armies of the Pharaohs and destined to become more famous as the field of Armageddon, was the scene of this decisive conflict. As anticipated, Sisera gathered his mob of an army with his superior equipment in the Kishon valley. There is no evidence that Deborah had any part in the actual command of the allied forces, but she certainly did keep Barak posted as to what to do. She announced that the day had come on which Sisera should be delivered into his hands, and, reminding him that the Lord had gone on before, ordered him to advance to the attack.

Barak and his ten thousand left Tabor and opened attack upon Sisera in the plain below. The defeat was complete—only Sisera escaping from the battlefield with his life. In her song of triumph, Deborah ascribes victory to direct intervention of God, who sent a storm that confused Sisera's army and rendered his equipment of no use. Retreat was turned into rout, and Barak's alert forces, flush with victory, slew the last man of them with the sword—except Sisera. The captain fled on foot and found hospitable lodging and refreshment in the tent of Heber, friend of Jabin, whose wife, Jael, welcomed Sisera, gave him food, provided couch for him to rest, and while he slept murdered him by driving a tent pin through his head. We refrain from comment on Jael's deed. Deborah said she should be blessed above women. The victory was complete, and Deborah and Barak celebrate in a song of rejoicing and thanksgiving (Judges 5).

VI. SUGGESTIVE

Just a few thoughts by way of practical application. How prone we are to forget God's goodness! The story of Israel ought to be a constant reminder of the folly of easy forgetfulness. A whining, complaining attitude on the part of God's people is proof positive that memory is not functioning.

Israel paid a terrible price for disloyalty; Israel paid in installments because she refused to learn anything between times. We do not pretend to say that every affliction that comes is sent direct from God as punishment for our sins, but we do know that a close, loyal walk with God greatly softens the blow of affliction and makes it much easier to endure hardship. It is good sense to be loyal to God.

In the light of this lesson, fortified by the experience of the race, we wonder if woman's influence is not due to her womanliness rather than to her efforts to make a man out of herself. Woman cheapens herself when she finds it necessary to invade the fields of the unwomanly

in her quest for self-expression. The greatest human inspirers of men, singly and in groups, throughout history have been the most feminine women; so may it ever be.

QUESTION-ANSWER

This method cannot be very effective unless every member of the class has read the fourth and fifth chapters of Judges. With such preliminary preparation, the teacher may proceed confidently both to bring out the facts of the lesson and to apply them to everyday problems through some such questions as these:

1. *The Office of Judge.* What is meant by the Period of the Judges? How long did it last? What was the function of a judge?

2. *Deborah, the Judge.* How came Deborah to be judge? Who was she? Who were the principal enemies of Israel at this time? How powerful was the hostile military force? To whom did Deborah turn for help in this crisis? Upon what condition did he accept leadership? How big was his army? Who planned the attack? Who aided in Sisera's defeat? How did Sisera meet death? How did Deborah celebrate victory? What mention is made of Barak in Hebrews?

3. *The Aftermath.* What was the value of Deborah's services? Is there room for women in public affairs today? What qualities of woman would prove most valuable?

REPORT-CONFERENCE

The teacher will assign in advance for reading and study the fourth and fifth chapters of Judges; there can be no intelligent appreciation of the life of Deborah without some familiarity with these chapters, and the opening minutes of the period may well be given to a running quiz on these two chapters. In advance, topics will be given to individuals for special report, and the teacher will check up on the progress of preparation;

failure on one assignment may ruin the possible effect of the lesson.

The following topics may be considered suitable: The Period of the Judges, The Duties of a Judge, The Choice of a Judge, Canaan Threatens Israel, The Strength of the Canaanites, Deborah and Barak, Defeat of Sisera, Deborah's Services to Israel, Woman's Influence in Public Affairs.

In connection with the discussion of each of these topics time should be found to bring out the detailed facts and to interpret them in the light of current problems and needs.

BLACKBOARD-DISCUSSION

Before presenting the detailed outline we would fix in our minds the central thought of the chapter as suggested by our headlines. Strength does not consist in physical prowess nor in military resources; it is an almost indefinable something that charges personality. A God-inspired woman is the strongest power on earth; she knows no limit to her ingenuity, she recognizes no bounds to her possibilities of achievement. One such woman can move a timid leader to dare the impossible; she is more valuable than a thousand soldiers. The place of woman has always been an interesting topic of conversation—by men. When all has been said, the fact remains that woman has always been man's inspiration, for good and bad, and it will be a tragic day when woman abdicates that throne of influence for standing room in the markets and forums of equal rights. Even in the exceptional case of Deborah, we find that her strength was in her ability to inspire others. These thoughts will prove steady as we view her story as a whole.

**A GOD-INSPIRED WOMAN IS EARTH'S STRONGEST
POWER**

- I. A CONFUSED PERIOD (Judges 2: 10-23)
 - 1. A Godless People
 - 2. Intermittent Rulers
 - 3. National Spoilers
- II. FIRST WOMAN RULER (Judges 4: 4, 5)
 - 1. Prophetess and Poet
 - 2. Palm of Deborah
 - 3. Her Administration
- III. THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY (Judges 4: 1-3)
 - 1. Jabin of Canaan
 - 2. Captain Sisera
 - 3. Mighty Oppression
- IV. A WOMAN'S STRATEGY (Judges 4: 6-12)
 - 1. Barak Summoned
 - 2. Agreement Made
 - 3. Partners in Arms
- V. VICTORY COMPLETE (Judges 4: 12-24; 5)
 - 1. The Enemy Gathers
 - 2. Barak Advances
 - 3. The Rout Complete
- VI. SUGGESTIVE
 - 1. Easy Forgetfulness
 - 2. Toll of Disloyalty
 - 3. Woman's Influence

WOMAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN MAN'S INSPIRATION

CHAPTER IV

GIDEON

Scripture to be studied: Judges 6 to 8

We come now to the study of one of the most interesting characters of the Old Testament. To many Gideon is the strongest of the Judges,—not in physical strength only, but in teachableness, faith, courage, ability to execute, and humility. We must include in our lesson the major portions of Judges 6-8, in order to do even partial justice to such an attractive character. The teacher, of course, will master these chapters, our sole source of knowledge of Gideon, and will emphasize or assign such selections as will enable the students to familiarize themselves with the facts and to make the obvious applications.

I. A YOUNG MAN'S CALL

We have no way of knowing certainly, but we have always thought of Gideon as a young man; he was a mighty man of valor, and somehow we associate his vigor and energy and resourcefulness with youth. He lived in a strenuous time when one hundred and thirty-five thousand Midianites and their allies had harassed the Israelites for seven years. Near the close of the period we find Gideon on the farm of his father, Joash, threshing wheat by the winepress that it might be concealed from the Midianites. A beautiful background out of which to draw a real leader.

It is significant that an angel of the Lord came and sat under an oak tree on the farm and addressed himself to the ruddy youth, asserting that God was with Gideon, and that he should save Israel from the Midianites.

We are not surprised that at first Gideon was disposed to be skeptical, and to express the opinion that God had abandoned Israel. When he appreciated that the angel was serious, he protested that his was a poor family in the tribe, and that he was least in his father's house. This latter attitude is entirely commendable, and helps us to understand why Gideon sought a sign by which he might know that he was really talking to an angel. It came about in quite a natural way. Gideon brought refreshments to his visitor. The angel commanded him to put the meat and bread on a rock and pour the broth out. He obeyed, and immediately the angel of the Lord touched the food with the end of his staff, and there arose a fire that consumed the food. Then the angel disappeared, and Gideon knew that he had seen an angel. The Lord told him not to fear, for he should not die.

II. AN EXPRESSION OF LOYALTY

Just as soon as Gideon had this assurance, he erected an altar to the Lord, and that same night God gave instructions for the overthrow of the altar of Baal that Joash had built, and for the destruction of the groves used in the idol worship. At nighttime, with ten of his servants, Gideon carried out the Lord's instructions and overturned the forms of Baal worship; he substituted for them an altar to the true God, and offered upon it a specially-prepared bullock.

The next morning when the men of the city observed what had been done and who had done it, they went to Joash and demanded that he surrender Gideon to be put to death for cutting down Baal's altar and grove. Joash reveals here some of the traits that were to characterize his distinguished son. He told the folks that Baal should be free to exercise his own religion, and that if he were really a deity he should plead against Gideon. This is what we call real witnessing on the part of the humble father of a great son. Let Baal do it.

Incidentally this is the test by which false gods have been exposed from that day to this. The religious side of

the renaissance (if we may so call it) in the Orient today consists essentially in the discovery on the part of the intellectuals of the powerlessness of the heathen gods and the corresponding folly of worshiping them. Intelligence and superstition cannot long live together. The Orientals by the hundreds of thousands are turning from their ancestral gods,—to what? The echo of that question should ring in our ears as a constant challenge to give the gospel to this changing world.

III. GIDEON'S ARMY TESTED

The Midianites and their allies, one hundred and thirty-five thousand strong, took up their confident position in the valley of Jezreel and awaited their opportunity. Gideon confidently sounded the call to arms, and his own clan responded; he then sent messengers to his own tribe, and the response was immediate and enthusiastic; additional messengers were dispatched to three neighboring tribes, and they sent important divisions. His army thus assembled numbered thirty-two thousand, no mean army, but less than one-fourth the size of the enemy.

Gideon thought he had the courage to go on with the conflict, but as he contemplated the difficulty he turned again to God for definite assurance that he was on the right track. Here he asked for the famous sign of the fleece, and God graciously granted his request, and the dew was on the fleece only and all the earth around was dry. Gideon was greatly impressed, but not quite satisfied. Note the timidity and evident earnestness of the man as he approached God again, saying in substance, "Pardon me, Lord, I will make only this one more request: let the fleece now be dry, and let the ground round about be covered with dew." And that very night God gave him this double assurance. That was enough for Gideon; not once after that did he even flicker. We have known fine men who have followed in Gideon's train and have asked God for a sign, and on the basis of it have made decisions for life. "Daddy"

Moore, the late lamented superintendent of the Kentucky Baptist Children's Home, accepted that position as a result of a sign given in answer to prayer. No one familiar with the work of this great servant of God will question for a moment the wisdom of his decision.

The Lord, keeping close to Gideon in these days of preparation, told him that his army was too big for him to give the enemy into their hands, lest the army would take the credit for the victory and leave God out entirely. Psychology may change, but human nature does not. God told him to apply the test of fear, and invite all who were fearful and afraid to turn back. The fine commander issued the invitation, and twenty-two thousand returned! Can you beat it? What must have been Gideon's thoughts!

But God was near by, and told Gideon that he still had too many men. This time a very practical test of alertness and efficiency—a sort of old-fashioned intelligence test—was to be applied, based on the conduct of thirsty men in the presence of a stream of water, with the result that only three hundred of Gideon's once glorious army remained. But they were enough with God. All of the others were dismissed to their tents, and the three hundred were prepared for the conflict.

IV. PREPARATION FOR BATTLE

God told Gideon that all things were in readiness, and that the Midianites were his just as soon as he would go down into the valley and take them. Again, as if to keep up the courage of his servant, he told Gideon (with his servant Phurah, if he was afraid to go alone) to go down unto the host and hear what he could. These two went on their little spying expedition, and saw that the Midianites were as numberless as grasshoppers and that their camels were literally without number, even as the sands on the sea shore. That was not so good; but they overheard the interpretation of a dream that forecast the delivery by God of the Midianites into the hands of Gideon. When Gideon heard this he worshiped God,

and returned to his host and told them to arise, since victory was sure.

He then divided his army into three companies of one hundred each, and armed (?) each man with a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a lamp or torch within the pitcher. Furthermore, he told them to watch him and do as he did; when he blew his trumpet, they should blow theirs and shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

V. COMPLETE VICTORY

Everything was at last in readiness. In the middle of the night, Gideon and his one hundred led the attack; they blew their trumpets, and broke the pitchers, and the other companies joined in holding the lamps in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands, and all of them shouting, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." We can only imagine that this battle cry must have affected the Midianites pretty much as the sleepy Commander of Ticonderoga was affected when Ethan Allen demanded his surrender in the name of the "Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress"; the Commander was doubtless ignorant of both. So in this case, both the Lord and Gideon were strangers to the enemy hosts, and their confusion was the greater on that account.

As Gideon's men stood "every man in his place round about the camp," the enemy fled in panic, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, so that they slew one another, while a remnant attempted escape, with Gideon's band amply recruited in hot pursuit. Such a victory could be attributed to no other cause than the intervention of God even as he had promised.

The greatness of a victor is measured not so much by his conduct in battle as by his behavior after victory has been won. In this respect, Gideon does not disappoint. A grateful people sought to make him king, and to establish the succession in his sons. Here Gideon showed himself the man. Read again his words, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my sons rule over you:

the Lord shall rule over you." Noble words of a commander who had conquered his own spirit.

VI. SUGGESTIVE

Victory does not always go to the largest armies; God is not necessarily on the side of the largest battalions; sometimes mere numbers may be in the way. In the case of Gideon, God makes it perfectly clear that numbers may cause leaders and led alike to be too conscious of their strength and forgetful of God from whom victory must come. There is great inspiration in the enthusiasm and strength of a well-organized mass, but more often than otherwise the real work of the kingdom is done by the small groups.

Even a cursory reading of history will persuade any one that the thinking of the world has been done by the minorities. The ideas of the martyred few become the public opinion of tomorrow. Only minorities think and plan and achieve; majorities follow. This is particularly true in the spiritual world. Our churches are sustained and operated by interested minorities. We sometimes lament the fact that more people do not attend our prayer meetings; maybe they are the better because of the interested minority. Then, God is not lonesome, no matter how small the company.

The elements of victory, personal and public, are numerous, and are illustrated by this old story. We mention only a few, Gideon listened to God, and Gideon dared to ask God for proof of his promises. This partnership between God and Gideon is one of the most delightful in religious history; not once was God displeased or impatient with his servant. What an invitation to all of us to put our trust in him. Then, Gideon trusted his own powers of initiative and resourcefulness, and did his best to make God's promises come true. Again, Gideon was pre-eminently a man of action, and, therefore, a peerless leader. It is no small feat to lead a little band of three hundred right into the camp of an enemy many thousand times as large; but Gideon's

masterful command of himself and unshakable faith in God made him irresistible. Victories are being won today with just these elements; we have no excuse for defeat.

QUESTION-ANSWER

The questions are drawn from all three chapters, and the teacher will select or modify or substitute to meet the requirements of his class.

1. *Gideon and a Crisis.* Describe the depredations of the Midianites. Why were the Israelites thus punished? Where was Ophrah? Whose son was Gideon, and to what tribe did he belong? What was Gideon doing when the angel appeared unto him? What word of cheer did the angel bring? What evidence of doubt did Gideon manifest? What command did the angel now deliver? Show that Gideon's doubt now changed to humility. How did the angel prove that he was an angel of the Lord?

2. *Gideon Tests God.* What change did Gideon make in the altar worship? Why did he do the work at night? What demand did the people make of Joash? What was Joash's very sensible reply? Why was Gideon called Jerubbaal? Where did Israel's enemies gather? How did Gideon summon his hosts? What double sign did Gideon ask and receive of God.

3. *God Tests Gideon.* How many men did Gideon have at first? Why did God say they were too many? By what test was the first reduction made? How many were left? What was the second test? How many were left? What became of the 31,700? How did Gideon's band compare in number with the hosts of the enemy? What assurance did Gideon receive preliminary to the attack?

4. *Gideon in Victory.* Explain the divisions and equipment of Gideon's army. What were the orders for the attack? What was the result of the attack? What reward did the men of Israel want to give Gideon? What was his answer? From the story of Gideon cite

instances illustrating the following traits of character: initiative, energy, resourcefulness, ability to inspire, courage, loyalty to God, genuine humility.

REPORT-CONFERENCE

The teacher will insist on familiarity with the three chapters under consideration as a necessary background for the discussion of the individual topics assigned in advance and carefully checked before they are due. The number of suggested subjects is not large, and the class members are urged to make their reports as full as possible.

We submit for suggested use the following topics: The Penalty for Israel's Disobedience, Gideon's Home Life, Gideon's Call to Service, Two Evidences of the Reality of the Call, Gideon and the Altar of Baal, The Army Assembled and Tested, The Strength of the Enemy, Gideon's Equipment and Plan of Attack, Gideon's Battle Cry, The Complete Victory, Gideon Refuses the Crown. "Gideon's Strong Points" would make a good subject for general class discussion.

BLACKBOARD-DISCUSSION

Our study in outline features most of the three chapters that deal with Gideon; it is designed to give a connected picture of Gideon's activities. Our headlines are worthy of consideration. God knew Gideon's heart, hence he did not grow impatient when Gideon asked for signs. Contrast his treatment of Gideon with that of the Pharisees in the New Testament and know the reason. God gratified Gideon's desire to know, even three times, and God was not disappointed, for Gideon demonstrated that his was not idle curiosity nor was it a desire to embarrass God. He longed for assurance, and when he got it, he was invincible.

GOD HUMORED GIDEON'S DESIRE TO KNOW

- I. A YOUNG MAN'S CALL (6: 11-23; 36-40)
 1. Busy at Home
 2. The Divine Message
 3. Objections and Assurance
- II. AN EXPRESSION OF LOYALTY (6: 24-32)
 1. Baal's Altar Down
 2. Lord's Altar Built
 3. Joash's Good Sense
- III. GIDEON'S ARMY TESTED (7: 1-8)
 1. The Hosts Rally
 2. The First Test
 3. The Second Test
- IV. PREPARATION FOR BATTLE (7: 9-18)
 1. Reconnoitering
 2. Division and Equipment
 3. Specific Orders
- V. COMPLETE VICTORY (7: 19-25; 8: 22, 23)
 1. The Noisy Attack
 2. Rout and Pursuit
 3. Gideon Resists Ambition
- VI. SUGGESTIVE
 1. Handicap of Numbers
 2. Power of Minorities
 3. Elements of Victory

GIDEON THRICE ASSURED WAS INVINCIBLE

CHAPTER V

RUTH

Scripture to be studied: The Book of Ruth

This chapter involves the study of one of the classics of prose literature. The Book of Ruth has been called a perfect short story. Sandwiched in between Judges and Samuel, it presents a charming picture of quiet domestic life in Israel, featuring a group of almost flawless characters who represent the highest in true womanhood and honorable manhood. The fact that Ruth and Boaz vie with each other for the title role must not cause us to overlook Naomi and Orpah; every character is essential to the beauty of the idyl, and in his or her own place contributes an element of strength. Every class will enjoy this book which the ancient rabbis taught was too interesting to read on the sabbath. It contains four chapters with a total of eighty-five verses; it can be read in very few minutes and the reading of it should be required as proper background for the appreciation of the subject of the chapter.

I. AN IMMIGRANT GROUP

In the little town of Bethlehem of Judah (so called to distinguish it from Bethlehem of Zebulun, northwest of Nazareth), called also Ephrath or Ephrathah, five miles south of Jerusalem and already famous as the burial place of Rachel, lived a modest family of good, solid, God-fearing folks—father, mother, and two sons—who, like most people of their day, derived their livelihood from pastoral pursuits. Since both crops and pasturage are entirely dependent upon proper amount of rainfall at the right time, any failure in the supply of rain

would cause famine. It was in just such an emergency that Elimelech found it necessary to do something to save his family from starvation.

Across the Dead Sea to the southeast, the mountains of Moab may be seen from Bethlehem. The little country, extending from Edom to the River Arnon, was chiefly a rolling plateau of some 3,000 feet elevation and a regular garden spot compared with the rocky soil of Bethlehem. The Moabites were idolaters and were usually hostile to their neighbors, the Israelites, and gave them much trouble. To this land of material plenty Elimelech migrated with Naomi and their two sons. Many scholars think the father made a great mistake, but to this writer it seems that the hand of God was clearly in the move.

II. FORTUNE FAILS

The ten years ahead were full of tragic things for the little family. So far as we know the immigrants did not suffer from hunger, but they were not exempt from what would seem to be more than their share of sorrows. Apparently they had not been in the country long before Elimelech died, leaving his widow and the two sons whose names Mahlon (sickly) and Chilion (wasting away) would indicate that they were not very robust, to say the least. The sons found wives among the Moabites, the former marrying Ruth and the latter taking Orpah as his bride. Near the close of the ten-year period the sons died, leaving their widowed mother with her widowed daughters-in-law. So the simple annals of these poor people record only marriage and death and sorrow.

The loneliness of the aging Naomi may well be imagined. She had come into a strange land for the sake of her husband and her children. Now her thoughts turn to the land of her fathers where as a "widow in Israel" she would be entitled to the special protection of Jehovah's law. Mature people are not easily transplanted; older people long for the familiar scenes and faces of

their earlier years. Naomi, with no blood ties to hold her in Moab, yearned for the hills of Judah.

III. HEARTS TESTED

Accompanied by the two younger widows, Naomi began her homeward journey. Doubtless the daughters-in-law set out as a matter of course to see her safely on her way. When they had gone some distance, Naomi made the perfectly natural suggestion that they return each to her mother's house, acknowledging her appreciation of their goodness to her sons and to her and praying God's blessing upon them, especially in their union with worthy husbands among their own people. Certainly this suggestion seemed wise, but it was not accepted.

The widowed mother kissed the younger women and all three wept aloud, as the latter insisted that they would return with Naomi to her own people. Then Naomi added to the argument of wisdom that of expediency. There was nothing for a young widow to do but to marry again. She reminded them that she had no other sons whom they could marry in compliance with the requirements of Levirate law, and urged that they return and find husbands in Moab. This would seem to be the expedient thing to do.

Orpah apparently was convinced and kissed her mother-in-law goodbye and passed out of the picture. We have no criticism of her; she did what seemed to be the sensible, wise thing to do. Naomi so recognized it and requested Ruth to return with Orpah. But Ruth could not see it that way and expressed her undying devotion to Naomi in words, the beauty of which shall endure as long as the heart responds to tender sentiments. Frequently quoted, these verses (16, 17) pledge a loyalty that means the turning of her back upon native land, kinsmen, and heathen gods and the acceptance of a strange land, strange habitation, new people, the true God, even a new burying ground. Such devotion convinced Naomi that further persuasion was useless, and the two made the journey of some twenty-five miles to-

gether back to Bethlehem. When they arrived and Naomi was greeted by old friends she insisted that they call her Mara (bitter) instead of Naomi (pleasant), because God had dealt bitterly with her, bringing her home empty. Even then her lot was not so bitter; she had overlooked the presence of Ruth.

IV. THE BEAUTIFUL GLEANER

They reached Bethlehem in the time of barley harvest, and the harvest field offered the only means of support for Ruth and her mother-in-law. The Jewish law very wisely made provision for the stranger and for the poor by prohibiting the full reaping of the corners of the field and the gleaning of the harvest (Lev. 19: 9), and also by forbidding the harvester to go back into the field after any sheaf that may have been forgotten (Deut. 24: 19). The grain fields were not fenced in; they were cultivated in strips as they are in Europe today. The harvests were plentiful and this beautiful young woman went proudly forth to earn bread for herself and her adopted mother, thus dignifying for all time honest toil, no matter how menial.

By good fortune she entered the field of a wealthy kinsman of her husband, Boaz by name. As she gleaned faithfully behind the reapers, Boaz entered the field and greeted all the reapers most cordially. (Incidentally, we recall a visit to a millionaire's office a year or two ago. He had not yet come to the office and we sat down to await his coming. Presently, he came in, and imagine our surprise and delight as he went from desk to desk greeting with cordial handshake every stenographer and clerk in the place before paying any attention to his callers. A man can be a gentleman even if he is an employer of labor.) He was quick to notice a new face in the field and inquired who Ruth was. The overseer explained how she had come and requested permission to glean and had been at work since morning.

Then Boaz sought her out and told her to stay right in his fields with his maidens and not to go to any

other field. He assured her that he had instructed his young men to protect her and that he had made ample provision for her refreshment as she worked. When Ruth wanted to know why she had found favor in his sight, he told her that he knew her story and he prayed that God would give her full reward for her work. At mealtime, Boaz invited her to partake of the bread and vinegar, and he himself gave her parched corn and she ate and went on about her work. Boaz then told his young men to let Ruth glean unmolested among the sheaves and to drop now and then on purpose some handfuls for her to glean. We can see the knowing smiles on the faces of the harvesters, for they understood even as we do that Cupid or one of his worthy predecessors was pretty busy,—and they were glad.

Ruth had all the barley she could carry that night and we can imagine the hilarious meeting with Naomi and the thrills that each got out of what they had to tell each other,—and Ruth stayed with the maidens of Boaz through the barley harvest and on into the wheat harvest which came two or three weeks later: “and dwelt with her mother-in-law.” Right pretty story, don’t you think?

V. FIDELITY REWARDED

All the world loves a lover and all the world, particularly a mother-in-law, likes to help the lover along. Naomi gets busy. It must be borne in mind that the incidents that follow were entirely proper in the light of the best customs of that day,—no matter how strange these customs may appear to us. Naomi made it clear to Ruth that Boaz was a near kinsman; she then told her to go to the threshing floor where Boaz would spend the night, and when he had gone to sleep to uncover his feet and lie at his feet and he would tell her what to do. She did as instructed and Boaz awoke in the middle of the night and asked who she was. She replied by requesting him to spread his skirt over her as a token that he would protect her by marrying her as the law required

of a near kinsman. Boaz was flattered that she chose him instead of a young man, and told her that he would grant her request on the morrow if a closer kinsman waived his right. That no one should know that a woman had been in the room, she must slip out before daybreak, with the six measures of barley which he gave her.

The next morning Boaz sat at the gate when the kinsman whom he addressed as "So and So" came along. The kinsman was unwilling to redeem Elimelech's land that Naomi had sold, and told Boaz to go ahead and buy back the land which included the right to marry Ruth. So Boaz proclaimed publicly the purchase of the land and of Ruth as his wife, and received the blessing of the elders and of all the people. By this union, Ruth entered the genealogy of our Lord.

VI. SUGGESTIVE

Servants of God in other days had a way of concluding correspondence and other communications with the letters, D.V. Remember? This abbreviation meant "God willing," and by it the writer meant to say that everything that he had agreed to do was conditioned on the will of God. This lesson reveals so clearly the hand of God in human affairs that it should call all of us back to a recognition of God's providences in our own lives. Certainly the Christian finds great joy in the thought that God rules and overrules.

One of the most beautiful things in this surpassingly beautiful story is the effectiveness of Naomi's quiet testimony. She so lived that her daughter-in-law was won to faith in the true God. The home is a most attractive field for mission work, and real Christianity shines brightest at home. We do not doubt for one moment that the most powerful witnessing for Jesus is being done right now by the mothers in our homes.

We boast of the progress of civilization and rightly so. Mechanical improvements have produced marked contrasts to the harvesting processes of Ruth's day;

things have certainly made marvelous strides. But in it all and because of it all, have we produced a finer human product than Ruth? It is about time that we began to measure the qualities of our boasted civilization by its power to turn out men and women. No, we are not going back to the past, but we would observe that wisdom was not born with the Industrial Revolution and that human happiness is not necessarily linked with mechanical efficiency.

QUESTION-ANSWER

Questions should cover in a general way the whole of the narrative and should be specific enough to bring out the particular facts of the lesson. We offer the following suggestive questions for use literally or as models for questions that will serve better the purposes of the individual group:

1. *In General.* How do we know that the Book of Ruth belongs to the period of the Judges? Locate by race and relationship every character mentioned by name in the book. What was the connection geographically and religiously between Bethlehem and Moab?

2. *Famine Driven.* What drove Elimelech's family from Bethlehem to Moab? What fortunes good and bad overtook them in Moab?

3. *Heart Testings.* In the crisis what course did Naomi choose? What advice did she give to her daughters-in-law? Was her advice sound? Which chose the more logical course? Is Orpah to be censured for her decision? Why did Ruth choose to leave her own people and cling to Naomi? What ties bound Ruth and Naomi?

4. *The Moabites Shines.* Describe their journey back to Bethlehem and their reception there. How did Ruth support herself and mother-in-law? Why did she find favor in Boaz's sight? How did Boaz enlarge the laws as to gleanings? Who did the proposing, Boaz or Ruth? Why? Sum up the manly qualities of Boaz and the feminine virtues of Ruth.

5. *For Reflection.* Illustrate from this lesson the importance of even an apparently trivial decision. What progress has civilization made since the days of Boaz and Ruth? Do you know any finer character than Ruth? What great distinction came to her? What is Naomi's contribution to the story?

REPORT-CONFERENCE

Let the entire book be assigned for study early enough in advance to make sure that every member is familiar with it; likewise, let be assigned topics for individual reports and group discussion in the class period proper.

We suggest the following as suitable topics for consideration: The Book of Ruth—Its Authorship and Date, Famine in Bethlehem, Attractions of Moab, The Famine-Driven Family, Fortunes in a New Land, The Three Widows, The Tearful Conference, Wisdom vs. Sentiment in Choosing, The Journey Back to Bethlehem, Ruth the Bread-Winner, Gleaning Laws Favorable to Poor, Boaz's Interest, Ruth's Marriage, Ruth's Distinction, Elements of Greatness in Characters of the Story, Ancient and Modern Civilizations Judged By Their Output, Some Practical Lessons For Today.

BLACKBOARD-DISCUSSION

Since we are studying the entire book the outline will be taken from the four chapters without any effort, however, to cover all of the details. The outline will present the story at a glance and the top and bottom lines will reflect the central truths of the book. Let's notice these truths before proceeding with the outline. Perfect devotion does end where self-interest begins. Orpah loved Naomi and was deeply grieved to be separated from her; in fact, she accompanied her sorrowfully on her journey, turning back only when Naomi's argument for Orpah's happiness seemed convincing. Ruth also accompanied Naomi, heard exactly the same arguments, but declined to turn back because her devotion to Naomi was perfect and without a suspicion of selfishness. We

do not censure Orpah, we simply love Ruth. It has always been true that self-losing is the sure way to self-saving, without any conscious thought on part of participants, of course. Orpah followed the course that wisdom indicated was best for her and we hear of her no more; Ruth acted without thought of self and is celebrated forever as the great-grandmother of David and the Moabitess whose blood flowed in the Saviour's veins. We are now ready for the outline.

PERFECT DEVOTION ENDS WHERE SELF-INTEREST
BEGINS

- I. AN IMMIGRANT GROUP (1: 1, 2)
 - 1. A Simple Family
 - 2. Economic Necessity
 - 3. Land of Promise
- II. FORTUNE FAILS (1: 3-5)
 - 1. Marriage
 - 2. Death
 - 3. Loneliness
- III. HEARTS TESTED (1: 6-22)
 - 1. Wisdom's Direction
 - 2. Expediency's Course
 - 3. Love's Way
- IV. THE BEAUTIFUL GLEANER (2)
 - 1. Human Law
 - 2. Abundant Harvests
 - 3. Honorable Support
- V. FIDELITY REWARDED (3, 4)
 - 1. A Modest Proposal
 - 2. Instant Response
 - 3. Abiding Happiness
- VI. SUGGESTIVE
 - 1. God's Providences
 - 2. Silent Testimony
 - 3. Progress?

SELF-LOSING IS THE SURE WAY TO SELF-SAVING

CHAPTER VI

HANNAH

Scripture to be studied: 1 Samuel 1 and 2

This chapter directs our thoughts to mother. It would seem that poets and artists have exhausted the subject, but justice has not been done to mother until each mother's son or daughter has formulated in his or her own mind the value of motherhood and mother's special contribution to his or her life. To many of our readers, mother is but a memory—fragrant and holy; it is a good time for reflection on the virtues that made her great and for high resolves so to live as to reflect the impress of those virtues upon our own lives. Others of our readers still enjoy the benediction of mother's presence in the flesh; it is proper to express gratitude for her gentleness, her patience, her sacrifice, her devotion and to resolve that mother's happiness shall be a matter of deep concern with us so long as she is spared to us. Hannah is one of the great mothers of all time and her greatness consisted largely in her faith in God and in her gift of a great son to the service of humanity in the name of God. We are not certain that such greatness is not woman's highest achievement. We shall study sympathetically the story of a woman with such substantial claims to greatness.

I. AN ANXIOUS WOMAN

The Book of Samuel opens upon a polygamous family living in the village of Ramah in Samaria about twelve miles from Shiloh, the seat of the tabernacle. The man of the house, Elkanah, was a member of the tribe of Levi, and an honorable, devout man. His first wife, Hannah, was childless; his second wife, Peninnah, was the

mother of several sons and daughters. Annually this godly man with his household went to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice unto the Lord. On such occasions Elkanah gave to his second wife and their children proper portions of the sacrificial feast, but to Hannah he gave a double or worthy portion as special token of his love for her.

Such a situation must inevitably produce unhappiness and discord. Peninnah, jealous of Hannah because of Elkanah's open preference for her, taunted Hannah with her childlessness,—not once, but repeatedly did she provoke her, especially at these annual feasts. The thrusts were too much for Hannah, already burdened with the heaviest affliction that could come to a Jewish wife, and she gave way to her feelings in loss of appetite and in tears, woman's sure refuge. Elkanah, fumblingly and rather awkwardly, sought to comfort her and commended himself by intimating that he was worth ten sons to her. We admire him for the effort, but he just couldn't understand.

II. AN INTENSE PRAYER

In her helplessness Hannah was ready to pray; no one can pray until he realizes his own helplessness. In bitterness of soul, and with much weeping, Hannah poured out her heart to God, calling upon him to consider her affliction and remember her, and vowing that if he would give her a baby boy she would give him unto the Lord for service all his days. This is one of the best examples of agonizing praying in the Bible; Hannah prayed as though she must have her answer to her prayer, speaking in her heart through moving lips after her voice had ceased to be heard.

Sitting beside a near-by post, Eli, the priest of the temple, watched Hannah at prayer, and, seeing her lips move but hearing no words, he came to the conclusion that she must be drunk. Cruel opinion of unknowing man! This is not the only time in the biblical narrative that a good case of religion was interpreted as drunkenness by even the ecclesiastical leaders. We refrain from

any effort at surmising the probable effect of the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit upon our conventional, formalistic church life. We hope that under conviction we would behave as well as Eli did.

Eli soon saw that he had committed a serious blunder; Hannah was not a wicked woman, her intensity had been due not to intoxicants but to her sorrowful spirit. The aged temple priest was quick to try to rectify his mistake. He bade her to return to her home in peace and added his own petition to hers that God would grant her request. She went away relieved; the sadness left her countenance, food tasted good, and her heart sang with happiness. God remembered her.

III. AN ANSWERED PRAYER

In due time the son was born and Hannah named him Samuel, which signified that she had been heard of God. God had remembered Hannah, and now that the blessing had been received Hannah remembered God as the source of the blessing. Not always the case with forgetful humanity, you know. Prayer becomes much more practical when we are as careful to recognize God in our experiences as we are to call upon him. Elkanah, the righteous father, continued his yearly custom of going to Shiloh to offer his sacrifice and his vow unto the Lord. We may be sure that he went now with even greater joy and enthusiasm than before; but Hannah remained at home with the lad. She and her husband had talked the matter over and agreed that it was best for her to remain with the child until he was weaned. We make no general comment here, but we are inclined to accept sympathetically the explanation of the mother who stays away from church because her baby needs her. In this case, we believe that Elkanah and Hannah both were discharging holy obligations.

IV. A VOW REDEEMED

We do not know a whole lot about weaning time in the Orient; we do know that Samuel was a boy of con-

siderable size when his mother brought him to the temple. There are possibly two explanations here. Hannah may have prolonged the period of intimate maternal care because he was her first born and because of his mission. We have known children in this country to nurse until they were three or four years old; it is not unreasonable to suppose that an Oriental child might not be weaned before he was six or seven years old. It may be insisted again that Hannah did not take Samuel to the temple just as soon as he was weaned; she simply did not take him until after he was weaned. We confess that the context would seem to rule out this conclusion; we believe that Hannah took him to Shiloh just as soon as he was weaned, physically and mentally, and ready for temple service. We are not forgetting, of course, that Samuel was prepared for special service under the skilled instruction of his consecrated mother. Not such a bad prep school!

As a sort of matriculation fee in temple service, Hannah brought along some bullocks, a little more than a bushel of flour, and a bottle of wine. She brought the young child into the temple, sacrificed a bullock, recalled her vow and God's answer to her prayer, renewed her vow, and formally gave Samuel to the service of the Lord as long as her son should live. "And he worshiped the Lord there." Samuel, young though he was, fell in with his mother's plans and made himself at home in the house of the Lord.

V. A MOTHER'S REWARD

Apart from the sins of Eli's sons and the solemn warning to Eli, the second chapter of 1 Samuel is all Hannah's. It gives space to a mother's reward. In the first place, she had the reward of happiness that comes from consciously following the Lord's will; her prayer of rejoicing is simply an outburst of gratitude from a mother's overflowing heart. Then she had the satisfaction of seeing her son grow in the service to which she had dedicated him, and each year when she came to

offer sacrifice she brought the lad a little coat which she had made with her own hands. Why did she bring a new coat every year? Well, there is nothing particularly mysterious about that when we remember that it is perfectly natural for a boy to grow; no doubt he outgrew a coat every year.

Again, this good mother found an invaluable reward in seeing her son become distinguished among his people, and that by his own right through service rendered. We have often tried to imagine the joy of the mother as she sees her boy rise to deserved fame. How do you suppose President Roosevelt's mother feels? Well, Hannah was entitled to all of the satisfactions that come from the contribution to the world of a son who wins through self-forgetfulness in service to God and to his fellow men.

Perhaps the greatest reward of parenthood, particularly of motherhood, is the certainty of physical immortality through the life of the offspring. The mother sees herself reproduced in the life of her son; she lives again in him. So Hannah saw her own trust in God, her devotion to him and her loyalty to his house, reproduced in her noble son. A queenly matron in a Kentucky town said of a fine young man in the town that she had rather be the mother of that young man than to own all the wealth of the town. Motherhood has its abiding rewards.

VI. SUGGESTIVE

Naturally a life as rich as Hannah's is full of suggestions for all who would learn the way of consecration. Hers was a life of prayer. She knew the source of power, the way to the throne, and the secret of effective praying. Through her power in prayer she points the way for all who seek victory over life's problems. Then, she placed as much stress upon discovering the hand of God in human affairs as she did upon her efforts to obtain his power in her behalf. Hannah would tell the world that God not only invites but hears prayer.

From this study we catch fresh emphasis upon the proper sphere of woman. No empire will ever be so becoming to woman as that which exercises sway over the childhood of the race. To be mothers of men, the teachers of men, the spiritual inspirers of men, is to rule in a realm of character-forming, destiny-determining influence. Unwise and unhappy the women who voluntarily surrender such a position for the unsatisfying allurements of fleeting careers.

Of course, we are not going to pay our debt to mother; that would be impossible. But we compliment ourselves by acknowledging that debt and keeping it fresh before us. For her suffering in giving us life, for her inexhaustible patience in guiding our infant steps, for her sacrificial love in ministering to our needs, for her constant prayers in holding us before the Father's throne, for her quiet, simple, loyal witness of her faith in God, we are indebted to mother. A worthy life is the only coin in which real payment of that debt can be made. All other recompense, apart from the worthy life, but magnifies mother's disappointment. Samuel repaid Hannah by putting into practice the ideals and principles which she gave him; so may all of us at least make an attempt to pay our debts to our mothers.

QUESTION-ANSWER

Since all we know about Hannah is found in the first two chapters of 1 Samuel, members of the group will be expected to read these chapters and two or three persons may be called on at the very opening of the class session to give the substance of the narrative. Then may follow some such questions as these:

1. *An Unhappy Family.* Who were the members of Elkanah's household? What was the relation between them? What towns are mentioned in the narrative and where were they? What yearly custom did this family observe? How did Elkanah show his love for Hannah?

2. *Hannah's Distress.* What was the cause of Hannah's grief? What vow did Hannah make to the Lord? How did Eli interpret her praying? Why? Why did Hannah discontinue her annual visits to Shiloh?

3. *A Great Mother.* How old was Samuel when she brought him to Eli? What was her dedication of Samuel? State the spirit of Hannah's prayer of rejoicing. Contrast Eli's motherless boys with Samuel. What is our debt to mothers?

REPORT-CONFERENCE

Teachers will assign chapters one and two to the entire group, and will ask individual members to bring to the class brief reports on the following topics: Ramah and Shiloh, The Polygamous Family, Hannah's Burden, Elkanah's Tenderness, Annual Worship at Shiloh, Hannah's Vow, Eli's Misinterpretation, Prayer Answered, Infant Training, Vow Kept, Samuel Dedicated, Hannah's Rejoicing, Eli's Sons, Value of a Good Mother, Our Debt to Mother.

In connection with each report there will be a little time for discussion, and considerable time should be found for the practical application of the last topic. The chapter has been studied in vain if it has not awakened in every member a fresh appreciation of mother and a new resolve to be more worthy of her sacrificial love.

BLACKBOARD-DISCUSSION

In this presentation we shall endeavor to cover the whole of chapter one and the relevant parts of chapter two. With Hannah as the model we would pay our tribute to motherhood. Perhaps it will not be out of order to stress our headlines first. We fill a lot of books with stories of great civilizations, and not oftener than once in a hundred pages does the name of a good mother appear,—not because there are no good mothers, but because our superficial minds are focused upon the feminine freaks and celebrities that cast their garish flashes

across life's way; we reckon our wealth in material resources, never pausing to look beneath or above to account for them. Even a thimbleful of intelligence will convince us that good motherhood is the basis of every great civilization; society cannot go higher than its mothers, and our noblest minds can pay themselves no greater compliment than to dwell now and then upon civilization's debt to motherhood. It is equally true that a worthy son or daughter is mother's crown.

This fact presents the double challenge to every one of us; the challenge to live worthily and the challenge to use our ability and influence to make it easier for every other mother's child to live worthily. Certainly no citizen, with her memory in his heart, can speak a word or cast a vote the result of which would hurt any mother's boy or girl. It is time that we were putting first things first, and apart from the welfare of our boys and girls there isn't much excuse for any civilization. In honor of mother we would pledge our best in behalf of the ideals by which she fashioned and guided her unselfish life.

GOOD MOTHERHOOD IS BASIS OF EVERY GREAT CIVILIZATION

- I. AN ANXIOUS WOMAN (1: 1-8)
 - 1. The Family Feast
 - 2. Taunted by Rival
 - 3. Burdened of Soul
- II. AN INTENSE PRAYER (1: 9-19)
 - 1. Outpoured Soul
 - 2. Cruel Rebuke
 - 3. Joyous Favor
- III. AN ANSWERED PRAYER (1: 20-23)
 - 1. Birth of Samuel
 - 2. God's Concern
 - 3. Holy Obligation

IV. A Vow REDEEMED (1: 24-28)

1. Presentation in Temple
2. Ample Offering
3. Formal Dedication

V. A MOTHER'S REWARD (2)

1. The Growing Lad
2. Distinguished Son
3. Physical Immortality

VI. SUGGESTIVE

1. Answered Prayers
2. Mother's Empire
3. Debt to Mother

A WORTHY SON OR DAUGHTER IS MOTHER'S CROWN

CHAPTER VII

SAMUEL

Scripture to be studied: 1 Samuel 3, 7 and 12

One stands almost helpless before a figure like Samuel. How can one in the brief space of one chapter present anything like an adequate study of a man who summed up in his character and services both the qualities and the achievements of priest, prophet, warrior, judge, statesman, and educator? Comparisons are worthless but it is not an exaggeration to say that Samuel was the founder of the prophetic order, the ablest of the Judges, the rebuilder of his nation,—second only to Moses among the great men of his people. The necessities of the case require that we confine ourselves to the three chapters, 1 Sam. 3, 7, 12, familiarity with which is essential to proper appreciation of even a superficial study. In any method which the teacher may adopt it will be well to have one student, with the aid of a good map, report on the geography of the lesson, showing the relative locations of the places mentioned and the significance of each; another member of the class may very well be asked to introduce each person mentioned in these chapters. Acquaintance with persons and places will help toward a clear understanding of the incidents and emphasis of the lesson.

I. AGE AND YOUTH

There is something beautiful about the companionship of old age and tender youth. It is generally supposed that Samuel was now about twelve years old. He had been a temple attendant several years, had grown thoroughly familiar with his duties (which in our judgment

consisted in making himself generally useful), had formed a real attachment for his aged, half-blind companion and teacher, and was making real progress in the study of the Law, of which he was to become such a distinguished interpreter. Eli, bowed under the weight of advanced years, made heavier by the steadily mounting shame heaped upon his sensitive soul by his reprobate sons, was no longer active. At best, he could do little more than potter around, keeping the forms of temple service intact but contributing nothing of positive spiritual leadership to his people. Indeed, the word of the Lord was precious, so much so that it was rarely communicated to the people and the people had no frequent vision of God. In fact, the people of that day were not greatly unlike moderns; they behaved as though God were dead or at least gone on a very long vacation.

Under such circumstances, Samuel and Eli were boys together; the unfolding alertness of the lad and the receding vigor of the old man met on common ground, and they had fellowship together. It would seem that they occupied sleeping quarters, perhaps in adjoining rooms, in the Holy Place of the temple. Their compartments were close enough together to enable either to hear the call of the other. The infirmities of age made Eli a light sleeper. Samuel's eagerness to serve caused him to sleep with one ear open; sleep, therefore, did not interrupt the congenial relationship that accompanied their daytime duties.

II. GOD CALLS YOUTH

In the very nature of things one accustomed to being waited on would make many demands on his servant; this is particularly true of an old person. No doubt, Samuel's sleep was interrupted frequently by calls from the adjoining room. One morning shortly before dawn while the sacred lamp still burned, the Lord called Samuel. The lad answered promptly and thinking his companion had called ran to Eli at once. The aged priest

told him that he had not called and bade him go back to bed. This experience was repeated with the same result. But when Samuel appeared the third time at Eli's bed, the latter knew that the Lord had called the boy. Accordingly he told Samuel to lie down and if the call came again to answer, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."

We are not overlooking, we hope, the patience with which Eli handled the situation. Three times he was aroused from his slumbers by what might easily have been interpreted as the nightmare of a boy. Each time, however, he received the youngster with the utmost kindness and without the slightest suspicion of petulance or impatience. When he discovered what was really happening to the lad, he rendered invaluable service in guiding him into an understanding of the wonderful experience. It's just too bad when men become too busy or too important to listen sympathetically to the problems of a boy. Eli, who is remembered chiefly for his helpfulness to Samuel, is a good example for all such.

The message which God gave to Samuel was a terrible one. In effect, it was that because of the vileness of Eli's sons, which Eli knew and from which he did not restrain them, the time had passed when either sacrifice or offering would avail; Eli's house must be destroyed. In great distress of mind, the boy lay there till morning, and then opened the doors of the temple, which was apparently the first duty of the day. Only upon Eli's insistence did Samuel reveal the message of Jehovah, and the old man's heroic resignation stands out among his most commendable traits. Samuel grew in the power of the Lord and all Israel knew that the prophetic order had been restored in him.

III. A VIGOROUS LEADER

For some years the Philistines had done pretty much as they pleased with the Israelites. Shocked by one engagement in which Israel lost four thousand men, the leaders decided to bring the ark of the covenant from

Shiloh where the sons of Eli guarded it and to use it in what they hoped would be a decisive victory against their enemies. The presence of the ark in camp inspired the Israelites but it also challenged the Philistines, and in the battle that followed thirty thousand Israelites were killed, including Eli's sons, and the ark was captured. Eli, ninety-eight years old, sat by the wayside awaiting news, and when runners told him of the capture of the ark he fell off his seat backward and broke his neck,—tragic end of a man who had judged Israel for forty years. The Philistines kept the ark for seven months, during which it proved to be a curse upon its keepers and upon the cities in which it was lodged. Finally, the Philistines filled it with a costly trespass-offering and returned it to the Israelites in Kirjath-jearim where it had been for twenty years, when Samuel called the people to prepare for the attack against the Philistines.

Samuel had the old-fashioned idea that spiritual preparation was essential to national success. He, therefore, called upon Israel to put away false gods and serve the Lord only, as the condition on which God would deliver them from the Philistines. Accordingly, they came together at Mizpeh in a great prayer meeting of confession, petition, and sacrifice, in which Samuel took the lead.

While Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines attacked Israel and were overwhelmingly defeated in a terrific thunder storm which the Lord sent upon them. As recognition of God's part in the victory, Samuel erected a stone memorial which he called Ebenezer, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

IV, TRIUMPHS OF PEACE

At last, Israel is at peace. Their strongest enemy, the Philistines, came no more into their territory. The cities which the Philistines had taken were restored to Israel and the coasts were cleared of Philistines; Israel gave attention now to problems of internal organization and national administration.

Samuel rendered distinguished service all of his life as the last of the Judges. From his headquarters at Ramah, where he lived and where he maintained an altar unto the Lord, he judged Israel. In the interest of convenience and efficiency, he inaugurated the circuit system, and held court annually in Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh. His administration was most acceptable to the people until it became apparent that his sons would succeed him. This story belongs to the next lesson.

V. PREROGATIVES ASSERTED

Samuel used the occasion of the public proclamation of the kingdom to give an accounting of his stewardship and to issue some words of exhortation and farewell to the people whom he had served for so long with such conspicuous ability; he had earned the right to speak. There is something almost sublime in the picture of this venerable servant of God calling upon his people to witness to the integrity of his private and public walk since his childhood. They gladly and unanimously gave him a clean bill of health.

Samuel then exercised the privilege of the aged leader and reviewed Israel's history, showing God's dealing with them from the days of Moses to the establishment of the kingdom. He indicated most emphatically that the success of the king and of the kingdom depended upon their willingness to fear the Lord and to serve him, and to obey his voice.

Samuel concluded his personal words by a demonstration of God's power through thunder and rain, and a passionate appeal to fear the Lord and to serve him in truth. In words never to be forgotten he linked the failure to make intercession with sin against God and pledged them his prayers in their behalf always.

VI. SUGGESTIVE

God came to Samuel in the night of service and duty and perplexity,—he comes to his own in similar conditions. The Psalmist says (74: 16) "The night also is

thine." How often God uses the night to reveal himself! Happy the Christian who has learned to hear his voice in the night of sleepless anxiety, the night of intense anguish, the night of crushing sorrow, the night of black despair! Such Christians will gratefully join the Psalmist (77: 6) in calling "to remembrance my song in the night."

It is a whole lot like God to take man into his partnership in making available the boundless resources of his storehouse. God in special blessings waits on conditions which man can fulfil. Such a plan is not evidence of arbitrariness on God's part, but is really for man's good. Israel out of harmony with God could not appreciate and enjoy to the fullest the victories that God was anxious to give; the individual out of spiritual harmony with God cannot know the sweetness of his presence in tender fellowship. God and man are partners in blessings.

The faithfulness of God is one thing that stands in the midst of the crash of human plans and ideals. We doubt if it is possible for us to know the value of this fact. Survey the life of Samuel, recall your own experiences, and thank God for his never failing faithfulness.

QUESTION-ANSWER

The difficulty here is one of selection, each teacher adapting the questions to meet his own requirements. We submit quite a list of possible questions.

1. *The Lad Called.* Who was Samuel's companion in the temple? Where did they sleep? What were Samuel's duties? Tell the story of God's calls to Samuel. Was Samuel's interpretation of these calls natural? How did Eli help him in responding to the call? What message did the Lord give Samuel? Why did Samuel reveal the message to Eli? How did Eli receive it?

2. *Samuel, the Leader.* What evidence of God's continued favor upon Samuel? What calamity did the Israelites suffer at the hands of the Philistines? How

did Samuel prepare the Israelites for victory against the Philistines? Describe the coming together at Mizpeh. Account for the defeat of the Philistines. What memorial did Samuel erect in recognition of the victory?

3. *Samuel, the Judge.* How long did Samuel judge Israel? What method of modern court procedure did he anticipate? Where did Samuel make his headquarters? Describe the setting of Samuel's farewell address.

4. *Samuel, the Steward.* What positive proof of his own stewardship did he offer? What appeal to history did he make? What conditions of the continuance of God's favor did Samuel prescribe? What importance attached to prayer in the closing verses? Name the outstanding qualities of Samuel's character.

REPORT-CONFERENCE

The teacher will persuade as many of the class as possible to read 1 Samuel 3 to 12, insisting upon thorough knowledge of chapters 3, 7, 12. In ample time to guarantee thorough preparation a few topics will be assigned to the most capable students to be reported on at the class session. We believe this lesson can be covered thoroughly by just a few topics, if at the close of each report the class will participate in sufficient discussion to bring out the details of the lesson.

The following are suggested topics: Samuel's Temple Training, God Calls Samuel, Samuel Becomes Prophet, The Philistines Routed, Samuel the Judge, Samuel's Challenging Stewardship, Samuel Reviews History, Samuel's Final Exhortation, Samuel's Greatness.

BLACKBOARD-DISCUSSION

The outline is particularly valuable in a lesson of this kind because it serves to tie the narrative together; it is also effective in presenting the lesson as a topical study. We call attention first to the central thoughts as emphasized in the headlines. God has always spoken,

he speaks today, he will speak tomorrow; but only the listening heart hears his words. The radio has made a real contribution to spiritual understanding, the most valuable of which perhaps is the principle of "tuning in." Multitudes of voices fill the ether; we hear only the one with which we are in tune. We must learn to tune out the modern noises and keep the connection open for the voice of God.

Really, it is not good sense to go through life in our own wisdom when the wisdom of God is so easily available. Running all through the narrative is the demonstration of the fact that piety is an excellent companion of patriotism. Samuel's love for God and for his country were never in conflict; in fact, each complemented the other. This is as it should be. True patriotism is grounded in faith in God. Happy the people whose leaders give themselves to the service of their country in the fear and favor of God. Samuel's greatness consisted largely in God's ability to work through him. We could covet for our own land in all places of responsibility God-fearing men who love their country too much to be disloyal to God.

GOD STILL SPEAKS TO THE LISTENING HEART

I. AGE AND YOUTH (3: 1)

1. A Congenial Pair
2. Intimate Relationship
3. Close Fellowship

II. GOD CALLS YOUTH (3: 2-21)

1. The Troubled Youth
2. Patient Old Age
3. Full Significance

III. A VIGOROUS LEADER (7: 1-12)

1. The Ark Restored
2. Preparation for Attack
3. Memorable Victory

IV. TRIUMPHS OF PEACE (7: 13-17)

1. Territorial Security
2. Property Restored
3. Justice Dispensed

V. PREROGATIVES ASSERTED (12)

1. Stewardship Opened
2. Admonition Given
3. Prayer Obligatory

VI. SUGGESTIVE

1. Voices of the Night
- 2 Partners in Blessing
- 3 God's Faithfulness

PIETY AND PATRIOTISM MAKE A FINE COMBINATION

CHAPTER VIII

SAUL

Scripture to be studied: 1 Samuel 9-11 and 15

A combination of wisdom and folly, supported by the argument of expediency, accounted for Israel's change from theocracy to monarchy. Samuel had not been much more successful in bringing up his boys than Eli had been. They were not quite so notorious, but they were not to be trusted by the people. Accordingly, when Samuel in declining years designated his sons as his associates and successors, the people protested and demanded a king. This action on their part is entirely commendable; Samuel's sons would have wrecked Israel. The people were further encouraged in their demand by the fact that their neighbors had kings; they would be like other nations. Such an argument is usually more foolish than otherwise; conformity to worldly standards usually makes for lowering of ideals. Samuel understood perfectly the unwisdom of the demand and frankly told Israel so, but God intervened and told Samuel to grant the request.

Saul, the subject of our study, became Israel's first king. If Israel was to inaugurate a monarchy, somebody must be the first king, and Saul's designation for this honor gave him distinction, but in chronology only. Saul is one of the colossal failures of history, his life serving no purpose apparently except by contrast to develop David and to reveal the true nobility of Jonathan. Since David is the subject of special study in the next chapter, it seems best to conclude the story of Saul before the lives of his armor-bearer and his son overshadow his own. The facts of this lesson, therefore, will be

drawn from 1 Samuel 9-11, 15. Of course, familiarity with the whole of 1 Samuel will be necessary before these biographical studies are completed, and the more the teacher can induce his students to master the better for their understanding.

1. GOOD BACKGROUND

Everybody likes to meet an attractive youth. We have that privilege in the opening of today's lesson. Saul was the son of Kish, a man of substance of the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest of the tribes. Kish was a farmer and stockraiser who wisely provided useful employment for his son. Saul, therefore, had the great advantage of rural upbringing and association; he was acquainted with nature, inanimate and animate. We feel sorry for the boy who is denied contact with the great outdoors and fellowship with some of the dumb animals; even a mule is much better company than a tractor.

Saul's outdoor life afforded wonderful preparation for future activities. From his shoulders up he was higher than any of the people. Not a bad distinction, by the way, if one may indulge in a bit of unwarranted spiritualizing; if a young man is going to excel, it is fine to lodge his triumphs from the shoulders up. Of course, the text refers to his physical height; but the other is worth thinking about. Saul was also a choice young man of exceptionally fine character; he was good to look at, and he was also worthy of admiration and confidence. Let no man or woman despise a good body; our bodies are the tools with which we work, they are the temples of the Holy Spirit, our usefulness is so often limited by the handicap of weak bodies. In his splendid physical equipment, Saul had a distinct advantage.

II. GOOD OPPORTUNITY

Saul was not without an opportunity to use his endowments. It seems that the characteristics of muledom have not changed much. The asses of Kish had strayed off and were lost. Mules have always had that habit;

any reader who can recall his days on the farm remembers distinctly the unromantic experience of hunting far and long for the lost mule, the lost cow, or some other animal of the pasture. That was exactly the situation here, and Kish told Saul to take one of the servants with him and go look for the mules.

Note the democracy of the pastoral life. There was no impropriety in the heir of the house and one of the servants chumming together on such an errand. In fact, we discover that the servant was most helpful and that Saul recognized his wisdom. Most distinctions among men are artificial, and some of them are all but silly. Wholesome youth, unspoiled by the superficial, is slow to see such distinctions. They journeyed far and without results when Saul suggested to his companion that they had better return lest Kish quit worrying about the mules and become uneasy about the young men. Get that! Here is one boy whose father thought more of him than he did of the domestic animals, *and the boy knew it!* Fine, don't you think?

The servant suggested that they consult the seer of Zuph as to their problems, the servant provided a gift for the seer, some young girls directed them to the seer's house. Now Samuel (for it was he) had been warned in advance by Jehovah and was, therefore, expecting the visit. In fact, God had told Samuel to anoint Saul. When Samuel saw him he had no difficulty in identifying Saul. He gave a dinner to some thirty persons in honor of Saul and his servant, who were made to occupy the chiefest places. Note the democracy of the society of that day. As soon as the feast was over Saul visited with Samuel on the house top, after which he dismissed the servant, and he and Samuel went for a long stroll. We have no record of the conversation, but we do know that Samuel showed the word of God unto Saul.

III. GOOD START

It is difficult to conceive of a young man's entering upon his life work under more favorable circumstances;

fortune certainly seemed to smile on Saul. As they walked along Samuel anointed Saul to be king over Israel and gave him three signs that would confirm his choice. These signs turned out as Samuel said they would, and when the last one was witnessed, Saul found himself in possession of a new heart, the special gift of God, and at Gilgal began his ministry as a prophet.

At Mizpeh shortly Samuel assembled the congregation of the people, reminded them of their rejection of God and their demand for an earthly king, and ordered them to prepare by tribes and thousands to cast lots for the king. The result of the election was to confirm and approve Samuel's choice of Saul, whom they had to find among the baggage, where he had modestly concealed himself, that they might present him to the people. The people instantly acclaimed him their king. Saul is ready for his first royal task.

He did not have to wait long. The Ammonites, ruthless enemies of Israel, made outrageous demands upon the men of Jabesh, who reported their plight to the new captain. Saul responded with immediate action. He called all Israel to the colors, arranged them in effective military style, and ordered an offensive. The defeat and rout of the Ammonites were complete, and Saul was the hero of the hour. The hundred per cent Israelites even wanted to put to death any who had ever questioned Saul's right to rule. Saul very promptly put an end to this outburst of brainless patriotism, by announcing that no man should be put to death, since God had given the victory. The people assembled again at Gilgal, ratified the choice of Saul as king, and offered sacrifices to the Lord with great rejoicing.

IV. FOLLY OF DISOBEDIENCE

It is obvious that the only person who could turn to naught such an auspicious beginning was Saul himself, and right soon he began the process of destruction by asserting two weaknesses that proved fatal—disobedience and deception. Samuel, by virtue of Saul's anointing by

divine authority, issued the command of the Lord to Saul to destroy entirely the Amalekites,—men, women, children, babies, flocks, and herds. Saul executed the order with dispatch and efficiency,—except he took the king captive and reserved the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings and lambs. In other words, Saul did everything but obey God. That has been the trouble with man throughout his history; he has always known better than God. That's the trouble now. Men have too much sense (they think) to obey the plain commands of God. The difficulty has never been one of understanding the meaning of God's commands; it has consisted in an unwillingness to obey the commands. Saul understood perfectly his commission; he thought he could improve upon it.

In defense, Saul insisted that the people took of the spoils the chief of the things that should have been utterly destroyed in order that they might offer them as sacrifices to God. A rather weak statement, we think; but it gave Samuel the opportunity to utter a profound truth. Hear it, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." That is to say, burnt offerings and sacrifices from disobedient hearts are meaningless; God requires obedience.

The sentence of divine rejection is pronounced just as gently as possible. Samuel made it perfectly clear that, because Saul had rejected the word of Jehovah, God had rejected him from being king over Israel. As the sin of unbelief is the greatest sin in the world, so the sin of disobedience is the greatest sin in the family of God. Saul's failure was not ordered by Jehovah, it was made inevitable by Saul's disobedience.

V. FOLLY OF DECEPTION

It is bad enough to disobey; it certainly does not help matters to try to cover up or soften the disobedience by deception. After his victory over the Amalekites and without knowing that God had already given Samuel the facts, Saul hastened to greet the prophet with his blessing and to assure him that he had performed the

commandment of the Lord. But tell-tale evidence of his deception was at hand. What was the meaning of the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen? Of course, this opened up the whole question and called for whatever defense Saul had to make. The defense is not altogether creditable. At best, it placed the blame on the people and confessed a fear of the people, and because of that fear admitted the transgression of God's commandment. Rather an unroyal statement for a king who had started out so well.

Samuel dealt with him as tenderly as he knew how, reminding him of God's goodness and also of God's justice, and this part of the narrative closes with the statement that Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, "nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul." Unhappiness and loneliness followed in the path of disobedience and deception.

VI. SUGGESTIVE

From the wealth of suggestive material of this lesson, we select three things upon which we may well reflect. The most promising thing in this world is youth; in fact, humanly speaking, there is no promise without youth. The contemplation of the charming youth of Saul should revive our appreciation of young people—their capacities, their possibilities, their youth—and should arouse the last one of us to exert ourselves to the utmost that only helpful influences may be thrown about them.

Saul's fatal decision to fear man rather than God—always the road of the popularity-seeker—raises a matter of tremendous importance to our country right now. There is a growing disposition among politicians especially to ask support of measures because the President wants us to. Now, remember we did not make this issue, and as much as we honor the courage of President Roosevelt and as loyal as we are to our country, when we must decide between the wishes of our President and the welfare of the kingdom of our Lord, we must obey God rather than man. We shall be very sorry if the

friends of the President make it impossible for us to cast one and the same vote for him and God; in the event of conflict, we must obey God.

The character of Saul opens up another subject for thoughtful consideration. Life's undercurrents are the things that develop our personalities. Saul persuaded himself that his deliberate modification of a command of God was its substantial obedience. Thus do men fool themselves. The substitutes for obedience are many and subtle, and it's the devil's business to see that the supply does not run out. Our only safeguard is to make obedience to God the sure rule of our lives.

We close with a little emphasis upon the headlines of our lesson. Failure's lament can be avoided only by carrying out wisdom's resolve; we trust that all of us may have sense enough to apply such obvious teaching.

QUESTION-ANSWER

In our judgment, questions should cover chapters 9, 10, 11, and 15 of 1 Samuel. If notified early enough, students will respond eagerly to the spirit of the teacher and a good time will be had in this review of Saul's life. We submit a list of questions, for use or suggestion, in the discretion of the teacher.

1. *Saul Anointed.* Whose son was Saul and to what tribe did he belong? What was Saul's personal appearance? On what errand were Saul and the servant sent? Why did Saul suggest turning back? Why did they visit Samuel? What preparation had Samuel had for the visit? How did Samuel entertain Saul? Describe the anointing of Saul. What confirmatory signs did Samuel give Saul?

2. *Saul, the Conqueror.* How was Saul elected king? Against what enemies was Saul first called upon to lead Israel? What terms did Nahash offer the men of Jabesh? How was Saul affected by this report? What means did he use to summon the Israelites? What spirit did

Saul show in the hour of victory? Describe the renewal meeting at Gilgal.

3. *Saul's Deception.* What command did Samuel issue to Saul with reference to the Amalekites? How fully did Saul obey the command? What reservations did Saul make? How did Samuel find out that Saul disobeyed? What plausible words did Saul speak to Samuel when they met? How did Samuel rebuke him? How did Saul seek to excuse himself? How did Samuel magnify the duty of obedience? What confession and petition did Saul make? What sentence did Samuel pronounce against Saul? Describe the killing of Agag.

4. *Practical Reflection.* What were Saul's strong points? What was his great weakness? What practical lesson does this story have for us?

REPORT-CONFERENCE

The success of this method will depend on the willingness of the class to co-operate with the teacher in covering chapters 9, 10, 11, and 15 of 1 Samuel; every member of the group should read these chapters. Then, in advance of the class session, topical assignments should be made for personal study and report. In connection with each report the teacher will guide the class in discussion and practical application.

We suggest the following topics: Saul's Family, The Search for the Asses, Samuel Entertains Saul, The Anointing of Saul, Saul Presented at Mizpeh, Saul's Victory Over the Ammonites, The Campaign Against the Amalekites, Saul's Disobedience and Deception, The Sentence Against Saul, The Death of Agag, Saul's Character, Some Practical Lessons.

BLACKBOARD-DISCUSSION

Since Saul's life is the story of squandered talents and wasted opportunities, we have built this outline and framed the discussion to reveal the gradual collapse of a life that promised so much, and incidentally to show the

cumulative effect of weaknesses indulged. Our aim is not so much to bring out the facts of Saul's life—although that has been done—as to use Saul as a model by which our lives may be guided in our efforts to make them fruitful. We are aware that such a plan involves negative teaching, which is bad psychology; we are also aware that one may be warned by the failure of another as well as inspired by his successes.

WISDOM'S RESOLVE: "I WILL USE MY OPPORTUNITIES"

- I. GOOD BACKGROUND (9: 1, 2, 5)
 1. Worthy Parentage
 2. Rural Activities
 3. Strong Physique
- II. GOOD OPPORTUNITY (9: 3-27)
 1. Important Errand
 2. Favorable Contacts
 3. Honored Guest
- III. GOOD START (10, 11)
 1. Anointed King
 2. Presented to Israel
 3. Victory and Celebration
- IV. FOLLY OF DISOBEDIENCE (15: 1-12, 22, 23, 26)
 1. Command Modified
 2. Substitutes for Obedience
 3. Divine Rejection
- V. FOLLY OF DECEPTION (15: 13-21, 34, 35)
 1. Honeyed Words
 2. Abrupt Disclosure
 3. Lonely Retirement
- VI. SUGGESTIVE
 1. Promising Youth
 2. Fear People or God?
 3. Life's Undercurrents

FAILURE'S LAMENT: "I HAVE PLAYED THE FOOL"

CHAPTER IX

DAVID

Scripture to be studied: 1 Samuel 16: 1-13; Psalm 78: 70-72

But for one terrible blot, David would easily rank with the greatest men of all time. Since his sin was matched by the depth of his penitence and the sincerity of his confession, and was actually surpassed by the measure of mercy extended and the glorious reformation effected, we may call him great in spite of the marred record. It is not ours to establish his greatness but to study his life, weigh it in the light of its contribution to its day, and draw from it qualities and truths that will help us live as richly as possible. Since David was certainly the most versatile of Israel's kings and the noblest saint among them we are venturing to take a glimpse at the entire life. By seeking the co-operation of their classes in time and by working very hard themselves, teachers will be able to make the life of David stand out in all its strength and beauty and scriptural significance.

I. DAVID INTRODUCED

David was well born. His father, Jesse, seems to have been a sort of feudal lord of Bethlehem and the outlying districts; his grandfather Obed was the son of Boaz and Ruth. Through his great-grandmother, Ruth, the Moabitess, therefore, David had alien blood in his veins; but since he was a member of the third generation of descendants of aliens he met the requirements of full recognition as a Jew. Blessed with an honorable and distinguished heritage and an environment of culture and substance, the lad grew into worthy young manhood.

Recognition came to him while he was busy tending his father's sheep. Samuel, lamenting the failure of Saul, was told to go to Bethlehem and anoint one of Jesse's sons whom Jehovah would designate as Saul's successor. For once, the prophet, burdened with cares and years, hesitated because of fear of Saul. God then told him to take an heifer with him and invite Jesse to join him in sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel journeyed the twelve miles from Ramah, gave his blessing to Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice. When they assembled, Samuel began to look on the sons of Jesse with a view to selecting God's choice. Jesse caused seven of his sons to pass by Samuel, and no choice was indicated. Half despairing, Samuel asked Jesse if these were all his children. The father told him they were practically all except the youngest boy who was in the field with the sheep. Samuel ordered him summoned, and as soon as the handsome, ruddy youngster arrived, the Lord told Samuel that he was the one, and Samuel anointed him in the midst of his brethren, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David.

Now Saul was troubled with an evil spirit, and his courtiers suggested that he employ a harpist to play when the evil spirit came on him. Saul liked the idea, and Jesse's son was recommended. Saul immediately asked Jesse to send David, and Jesse complied with the request, sending along some gifts for Saul. David loved the king from the start, and the magic of his harp soothed the troubled spirit of Saul.

II. PERSONAL FORTUNES

David's famous duel with Goliath was the beginning of his fame and also of much trouble. It is not necessary to recount the details of this encounter. Suffice it to say that David's victory in the face of the cowardice of the Israelites, the jeers of his brothers, and the contempt of his enemy was most impressive; it was all the more so because he spurned a warrior's armor, fought in his own uniform, with his own weapons, and trusted

God for the victory. It was quite natural that he should become the hero of the people and that his deed should be celebrated in song.

The honors showered upon him seem to have had no bad effect whatever on David. He remained the same quiet, modest youth that we have come to know. David's valor, however, made a lasting impression upon Jonathan, son and heir of the king, and was the beginning of an affection, "surpassing the love of women," and a friendship that will remain a classic for all time. At the sacrifice of his own succession, Jonathan repeatedly opposed his father's schemes and regularly showed his devotion to David. David's lament over Jonathan is one of the beautiful things of his life.

The prominence of David filled Saul with an insane jealousy that inspired a persistent persecution that drove David into the ranks of outlaws and guerrillas in his own land. Repeated attempts were made upon David's life, with no result except to advertise his skill and bravery. On at least two occasions Saul was entirely at the mercy of David, but the latter refused to take advantage of the opportunity to slay the king. In the latter part of the period of his outlawry, David occupied the stronghold of Ziklag, where he had the opportunity to mobilize the band of resourceful men who had been drawn to his standard. These years reveal David's resourcefulness, ability to get on with other people (particularly foreigners), organizing genius, and generous spirit. They were troublous days, not without their compensation in the devotion of Jonathan, and, in his saner moments, in the regret and penitence of Saul.

III. KING OF JUDAH

Following the death of Jonathan and his two brothers and the spectacular suicide of Saul on Mount Gilboa, came David's beautiful lamentation in which he remembered Saul just as tenderly as he did the devoted Jonathan. Almost immediately the men of Judah invited David to become their king. He set up his capital in

historic Hebron, strengthened his position by some diplomatic marriages, and fortified himself in anticipation of the time when he would become king of all Israel.

For a brief period Israel maintained at least nominal allegiance to Benjamin, over which Ishbosheth, Saul's fourth son, ruled for some two years. It is not likely that the other tribes had much interest in this feud between Judah and Benjamin, which was made notorious by intrigue, betrayal, and assassinations,—notably the murder of Abner by Joab and the assassination of Ishbosheth by two of his captains. In all these bloody events, David showed himself a real king, without malice and with no consideration for those who accomplished the death of his enemies. Upon the news of Abner's death, he pronounced a curse upon Joab and his posterity, and followed Abner's body to the grave. When the murderers of Ishbosheth brought his head to David, the latter promptly ordered his young man to slay these traitorous captains just as he had slain the bearer of the news of Saul's death, who thought he was bringing good news. David's bravery was equaled certainly by his generosity to his foes.

IV. KING OF ISRAEL

The separate kingdom of Israel having fallen of its own weight of inefficiency, the leaders of the tribes came to David at Hebron where he had ruled Judah for seven years and six months, and urged David to become their king. David, therefore, made a league with them (a constitutional monarchy), and was anointed king over all Israel. Only thirty years of age, this vigorous ruler inaugurated a policy for Israel that stamped him as the master ruler of his people.

Desiring a more centrally located and more easily defended capital, David captured the fort of Zion (which we call the city of David) from the Jebusites, who were expelled or subdued. He then enlarged the fortifications, and gave or restored the name of Jerusalem. He then contracted with King Hiram of Tyre to build a royal

palace in the new capital, and proceeded to enlarge his household by taking more concubines and wives from Jerusalem. Jerusalem having been made the civil center of the new nation, David's next task was to make it the religious center. He therefore proceeded to establish the line of high priests by increasing the number of Levites and singers, and by bringing the ark from Kirjath-jearim to remain permanently in Jerusalem. The bringing of the ark into the city was made the occasion of a religious celebration in which David took the lead. His royal spouse, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked out a window and saw the king clad only in a linen kilt (ephod), leaping and dancing before the Lord, and despised him in her heart. The harmony between them was never restored.

With the kingdom fully established, David longed to build a temple to surpass his own palace. Nathan approved the idea, but told David that he should be denied the privilege of building the temple, this honor being reserved for his successor. Almost the first official act of the new regime was to restore to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's lame son, the estate of his grandfather Saul, and to provide for the future comfort of the unfortunate young man, stipulating among other things that he should eat at the king's table continually. The currents of loyalty were running strong in David; he had made a good start.

V. SIN AND CONSEQUENCES

The story of David's terrible sins is told so fully and clearly in the text (2 Sam 11, 12) that we refrain from giving the details here. Suffice it to say that David coveted his servant's wife, committed adultery with her, and then ordered the husband to be so placed in the battle line that he would be killed. Following the death of the husband, David took the widow to wife. Their first-born died, and David's grief anticipated the consolations of the gospel. Their second son was Solomon.

Nathan's interview with David is one of the most dramatic stories in literature. Nathan brought from David confession and repentance, the genuineness of which cannot be doubted. Not only in this passage, but throughout the writings of David, the note of deepest penitence is sounded. God heard him and forgave him, and used him mightily afterwards, but he told David that because of his sin the sword should never depart from his house.

This judgment became effective at once, and continued in operation throughout the remainder of David's life. It was inevitable that the sons of polygamous marriages should quarrel and give vent to their jealousies. The most conspicuous uprising of the period is the rebellion of Absalom, David's most attractive son. The waywardness, recklessness, and disloyalty of this talented young man broke his old father's heart, and his tragic death called forth from David the most sublime apostrophe in the language. The insurrection led by Sheba and the conspiracy of Adonijah were other troublous incidents of the close of David's reign. Only God can forgive sin, but God himself does not rub out the consequences of sin.

VI. EVENING OF LIFE

David had grown very old; his circulation was so poor that clothes gave him no heat; it was evident that the end was not far off. Under such circumstances the question of the succession was uppermost in the minds of all patriots and of some others. Adonijah, younger brother of Absalom, made preparations to succeed David. But Nathan and Bathsheba had other plans; they resolved that Bathsheba's son Solomon should be made king, and successfully they plotted to that end. David named Solomon as his successor, and Adonijah submitted without contest.

David's charge to Solomon is a pretty fair summing up of his ideals, beginning with the oft-quoted words, "I

go the way of all the earth." David urges Solomon to show himself a man, and to walk in the ways of the Lord always that he might prosper in all that he does. After a busy rule of forty years, King David "slept with his fathers." We are sure that David found comfort in the beautiful sentiments from his own pen through the years. This is a good time to repeat in unison Psalm 23.

We close with just a word concerning our headlines. David was a man after God's own heart because his heart (not always his actions) gave increasing evidence of moral progress. The Psalms reflect his spirit, and God looks on the inside. The lesson also makes clear the fact that a great life is within the reach of all who will live in the presence of God.

QUESTION-ANSWER

That the essential facts of David's life may stand out, we present a list of questions on the entire record.

1. *Youth's Triumphs.* What do you know of David's ancestry? What was his occupation as a lad? What distinction came to him as a shepherd lad? What was the occasion of his going to Saul's court? What were the effects of his victory over Goliath? Contrast Saul's treatment of David with David's attitude toward Saul. What was the relationship between David and Jonathan?

2. *David, the King.* Show how David was made king of Judah and later of Israel. What change in capitals did David make after becoming king of all Israel? How important did he make Jerusalem? What loyalty did King David show Saul's family? What great ambition of King David was denied him?

3. *David's Great Sins.* Describe briefly David's sins. Tell the story of Nathan's interview with David. Give the substance of David's confession. In what realms did David excel? What great qualities did he possess? What is history's debt to David?

REPORT-CONFERENCE

By beginning very early this method can be made the best for the group of average size. You will note that in connection with each topic we are designating the scriptures. There will, therefore, be no difficulty in locating the material, if the assignments are made early enough. There will be time for only brief discussion after each report, and the teacher must conserve the time so that the outline of all of David's life may be brought before the class. Of course, some of these topics may be left out, in the discretion of the teacher.

David's Ancestry and Anointing (1 Sam. 16: 1-13), David Joins Saul's Court (1 Sam. 16: 14-23), David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17), David's Personal Relations with Saul, Jonathan and Michal (1 Sam. 18-27), David, King of Judah (2 Sam. 1-4), David, King of All the Tribes (2 Sam. 5), David Establishes the Kingdom (2 Sam. 6-10), David's Sin (2 Sam. 11, 12), Absalom's Rebellion (2 Sam. 13-18), David Purchases Temple Site (2 Sam. 24), David's Old Age (1 Kings 1 to 2: 11).

Three general subjects for which specific scriptures cannot be given might prove of interest. They are: David and Jerusalem, David and Foreign Peoples, David the Poet (citing especially Psalms 23, 51, 32, 139). The period may be concluded with a general discussion of the greatness of David.

BLACKBOARD-DISCUSSION

It is not a misstatement to say that David distinguished himself as shepherd lad, musician, fighter, poet, executive, financier; in all of these activities he is conspicuous among his contemporaries. In these capacities he grew a personality, which may be considered his greatest achievement, notable for its magnanimity, generosity, and nobility. A good outline could be made featuring his attainments in each of these fields, and the humanness of his personality. However, it seems best to us to present an outline of his life arranged somewhat

chronologically and exhibiting the main events of that life, leaving the student free to form his own estimate of the variety and quality of services rendered. Maybe we are attempting to cover too much ground in this presentation, but we are anxious to do partial justice at least to the life as a whole, with considerable emphasis upon the forty years of his kingship.

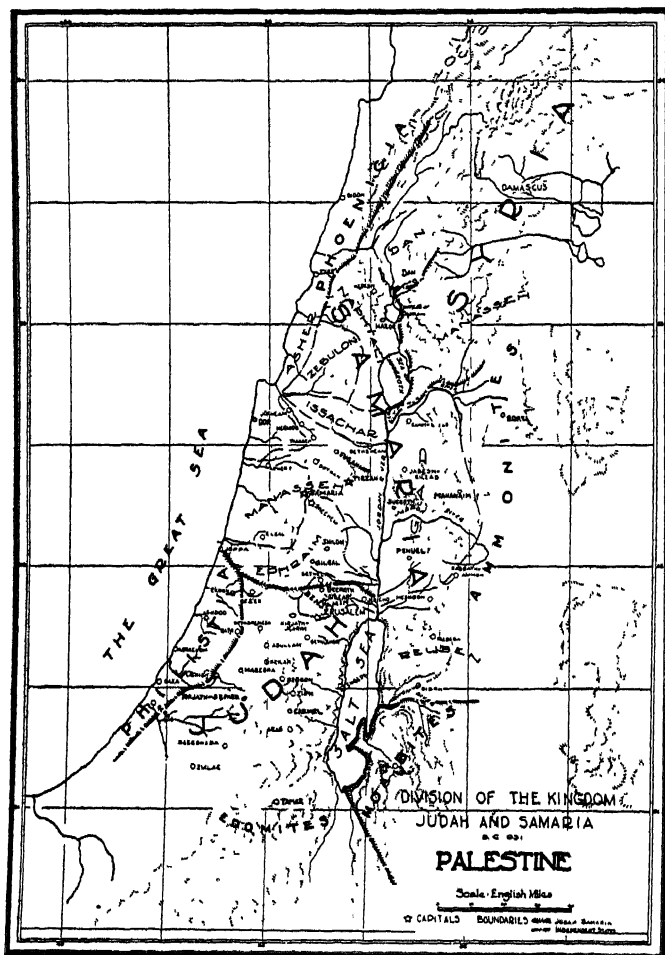
DAVID WAS CALLED A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

- I. DAVID INTRODUCED (1 Sam. 16)
 - 1. Noble Ancestry
 - 2. Anointed by Samuel
 - 3. At Saul's Court
- II. PERSONAL FORTUNES (1 Sam. 17-27)
 - 1. Victory and Acclaim
 - 2. Loyalty and Devotion
 - 3. Jealousy and Rage
- III. KING OF JUDAH (1 Sam. 28 to 2 Sam. 4)
 - 1. Saul's Tragic End
 - 2. The House of Saul
 - 3. Every Inch a King
- IV. King of Israel (2 Sam. 5-10)
 - 1. The Tribes United
 - 2. Jerusalem the Capital
 - 3. Kingdom Established
- V. SIN AND CONSEQUENCES (2 Sam. 11-24)
 - 1. Adultery and Murder
 - 2. Confession and Judgment
 - 3. Rebellion and Revolt
- VI. EVENING OF LIFE (1 Kings 2 to 2: 11)
 - 1. Problem of Succession
 - 2. Charge to Solomon
 - 3. Comfort in Song

A LIFE LIVED IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS A
GREAT LIFE

PART III

FROM SOLOMON TO MALACHI



CHAPTER I

SOLOMON

A RICH HERITAGE

Solomon came into the place of power and authority with the proverbial spoon between his teeth. His father, David, and his mother, Bathsheba, made it possible for him to begin life well ahead of the procession. Saul had failed, but David succeeded in a marvelous way. The court of David was a great place for the young prince to live and grow. The enemies of God's people were gradually driven back and subdued. The boundaries of the kingdom were pushed back until David reigned over a respectable kingdom.

God was smiling upon the country in an unmistakable way. He had come back to guard, guide, and feed his own chosen people. Because of David's wisdom and popularity, the kingdom was united and the people engaged in friendly work together. It was an era of prosperity, peace, and plenty.

David was a devout worshiper of Jehovah and had developed the religious life of the kingdom to a very high plane. Solomon found a strong emphasis on worship and godliness.

His kingdom was not only at peace with all the world, but friendly alliances with neighboring kingdoms made material prosperity inevitable. Hiram, King of Tyre, was a staunch friend who was able to make Solomon rich. The stupendous building program was practically assured by such alliances.

David had carried in his inner heart a dream of a beautiful temple for God. The blueprints and specifications called for a magnificent building to the glory of Jehovah of hosts. Although he was forbidden to build,

the old king gathered rich stores of materials and money that the Temple might be assured. A conservative estimate places the value of two and one-half billion dollars on the sum left to Solomon.

He was endowed with kingly blood, the favor and approval of God, the blessings of David, his father, the universal acclaim of his people, a united and happy nation, and every other evidence of the smile of heaven was upon him.

AN AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING (1 Kings 3: 4-15)

In the early days of his reign the young man met God and was deeply impressed by the experience. In God's presence he acknowledged his great debt to his father and to God. He confessed his own weakness and lack of experience. He knew that he could not carry on the work of the kingdom in his own strength. In the deep consciousness of his need, he requested of God an understanding heart that he might know how to guide the destinies of the kingdom. It was a noble prayer. He wanted wisdom to represent God in the affairs of the kingdom.

Jehovah was delighted with Solomon and his request. Nothing could have pleased him more. He realized that the boy might have asked for long life, riches, the life of his enemies, or a number of other selfish things. In accordance with the divine nature, he gave him the desire of his heart and added many other things. God always stands ready to give more than we ask.

With such a beginning, surely the young Solomon must reach heights never before scaled by one of God's representatives! It seems too good to be true to find such a fine spirit of reverence, humility, gratitude, and obedience in a ruler.

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

It did not take long for him to demonstrate to the world that he was to be the autocratic ruler of his realm. He had very little sympathy with the democratic aspira-

tions of his people. It was easy to see that he planned to be an oriental despot. Each man who gave any evidence of being in his way was put aside. Adonijah, his older brother, had attempted to seize the throne before the death of David. He was considered dangerous and, on a rather flimsy pretext, was executed by the order of Solomon.

Abiathar, the priest, and Joab, the chief of the army, were quickly deposed. The priest was banished and Joab was brutally executed. Shimei who cursed David was killed to make the way safe for Solomon.

In order to insure political strength, Solomon took the daughter of Pharaoh as one of his wives. It was a shrewd move on his part to guarantee Egyptian support. He seemed to ignore the dangers that were involved. He was bent on having a great kingdom.

A MAGNIFICENT COURT

It has already been evident that Solomon was headed for a rich, secular, worldly, magnificent, oriental court. He believed that his city and his court should rival all others. Luxury was the one order of the day.

He must have beautiful palaces, strong walls, plenty of soldiers, luxurious furnishings and all that went with the oriental court. We are told that he presented such a dazzling array of fine things that the Queen of Sheba was practically "knocked breathless" before him. It was more than she was prepared to see. When we consider that she had probably been accustomed to a fine display of magnificent furnishings, we are more impressed with the implications.

Women from all the neighboring countries were brought in until the harem was full of carefully selected beauties. They, of course, added to the picture a note of luxury, abandon, and show. The total number of these women was one thousand.

Trade routes were opened and heavy tolls were taken of all traders. Solomon's kingdom lay on the very bridge

between the great world kingdoms. It was easy to exact tribute from all of the caravans.

By using the Phœnicians, he was able to build and operate a great fleet of trading vessels. These boats brought back fabulous sums from all the eastern markets. The gold, jewels, fine garments, spices, and other precious wares only added to the splendor and magnificence of his worldly kingdom. The staggering totals of his wealth are almost beyond belief.

AN EXTRAVAGANT BUILDER

It was as a builder that the young king left enduring monuments. The erection of the Temple on Mount Moriah was the outstanding event of his reign. That structure became the one unifying force in the kingdom.

That famous old mountain was redolent with memories of Abraham, Isaac, and David. On that sacred spot David had planned to build a beautiful house for God. For years he had looked to the hill for the fulfillment of his dreams. Valuable material, supplies, and money were gathered and made ready for the structure.

Solomon took the specifications from his father's hands, gathered up the materials, called Hiram of Tyre into the deal, and set out to do God's bidding with all his heart. The hill was leveled and filled in until an area of about twelve acres was prepared.

The treasures of the world were ransacked for wood, stone, metal, and fine things. The cedars of Lebanon were purchased, cut, prepared, transported to the sea, floated down to the spot nearest Jerusalem, carried up the steep mountain to the city, and put in their places according to the plans.

He adopted the Egyptian method of using forced labor. His own people, as well as the Canaanites, were included in the draft. Thirty thousand of these men labored in the mountains of Lebanon. He used seventy thousand to carry these logs up the steep hill. Eighty thousand

men were forced to work in the quarries. Cruel taskmasters were employed to drive the workers to their utmost.

Even with this army of workers the task of building the Temple required more than seven years. Hiram of Tyre furnished the skilled workmen who became responsible for the actual completion of the work.

The Temple was built on the same plan used in the construction of the Tabernacle except that it was made twice as large. It was probably about one hundred and twenty feet by sixty feet. Even though it was not a large structure it was one of the finest and most famous buildings ever erected on the earth. God's name was honored.

After the completion of the Temple the army of workers labored for thirteen years to complete his great palace. The same fine materials were used and the luxurious furnishings were brought to make the palace a beautiful one.

In addition to these two buildings, Solomon built a magnificent palace for his Egyptian wife, six cities, an armory, supply depots for the army, pools and walls on every hand. It was a real program of public works that left the people gasping when they looked upon the evidences of wealth and splendor.

A FOOLISH WISE MAN

The wisdom of Solomon was a special gift from God. At Gibeon he had been granted such extraordinary powers that he became the wisest man of his age. As a judge and executive he had no equal in the land. He had prayed for an understanding heart that he might be able to judge the people wisely and intelligently. That wisdom had been given so that his fame as a wise man spread far and wide. His quick, ready wit and his keen, alert mind brought him standing as the wisest of the wise.

This wisdom was strictly limited in its scope. He failed to show evidences of sympathy, tolerance, tact in

handling his people, and wisdom in dealing with poor, stricken subjects. He was vain and ungodly in his desires for material gain and outward show. He became a reckless spender and a lover of vain display. His one thousand wives and concubines ruined him. He could not be counted wise after such a foolish venture as was manifested in the collection of women from all the surrounding peoples.

He ceased to show the proper love for Jehovah after his complete surrender to worldly things. He could not worship God with devotion and at the same time pay homage to all the gods of the heathen peoples. His desire to please the neighboring peoples by bowing down to their gods was a foolish move.

Perhaps one of the most apparent evidences of lack of wisdom was his utter disregard of the rights of the people when he needed money or work. His people merely existed to make possible the full gratification of every desire of the king. If he wanted a hundred thousand workmen for his building program he forced them to go to work. Tribute money and taxes were taken from the people in such quantities that very little was left. The cruel taxgatherers robbed the people of practically everything they possessed. He failed to realize that he was literally destroying the morale and spirit of his subjects. How he was able to keep down actual revolts and uprisings is more than we can explain. God was watching the foolish one.

A GREAT RULER

In spite of these serious defects and mistakes, Solomon has been classed among the great rulers. He was foolish, but the forty years of his reign saw a tremendous growth in many directions. It was an era of prosperity, peace, expansion, building, fortification, extension of trade and commerce, alliance with the other peoples, and forward movements along many lines. His public works program made possible many public buildings and fortifications that made for security, unification, and power.

Solomon did a great work for his kingdom. He will always be placed among the great rulers in Jerusalem. His efforts in the direction of permanent peace for his land constituted a real contribution. "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and fig tree. from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."

REVOLTS AND TROUBLE

Damascus, in the North, and Edom, in the South, soon showed signs of revolt. These peoples were not satisfied to be under the yoke of Solomon. It was an easy matter to break away from him and declare their independence. The ruler in each of these lands carved off a generous slice of the land controlled by Solomon. There was a marked indication of weakness as each crisis came upon Solomon.

A more serious test came when Jeroboam led an active movement against the king. Jeroboam had been one of Solomon's trusted overseers and had been given a real opportunity to know and cultivate the friendship of the people. He knew how to offer sympathy and to listen to their cries of woe. He conceived the idea that he could serve his people better by a definite revolt. He decided to call out the people of the northern part of the country and break away from the authority of Solomon. It came very near being serious for the country. Solomon was able to put it down, and Jeroboam was forced to flee to Egypt to save his life. He realized that the victory could be his on the death of the king. He was waiting for the day when he could go forth to deliver his people from the cruel taskmaster. Shishak of Egypt was glad to welcome and protect him in his palace. The young rebel continued his close touch with the northern tribes until the death of Solomon.

We may be sure that the king's last days were not happy ones. The consequences of his sins were heavier than he had imagined. The wealth, position, prominence,

knowledge, wisdom, wives, concubines, horses, chariots, soldiers, buildings, cities, trade routes and victories, failed to bring real happiness. The reign that started in such a blaze of glory and continued to be more illustrious with each passing year had at last lost much of its glamour and grandeur. Solomon realized that he had failed.

THE CRISIS

When news reached Egypt of the death of Solomon, the young Jeroboam was ready to start instantly. The northern tribes would be waiting for him to lead them in revolt. All the tribes had been willing to accept David's choice forty years before, but they were not ready for such dictation now.

Rehoboam took up the affairs of the kingdom and declared himself king of the whole land. When met by a bold demand to reverse his father's policies, he was not equal to the emergency. It was more than he could handle. The people of the North were demanding that excessive taxation and forced labor be lessened and made more reasonable. They made it perfectly clear that real trouble was ahead if the young king failed to adjust the burdens. It was a challenge.

Rehoboam was a very foolish young man and failed utterly in his first great crisis. Contrary to the counsel of his old advisers, he angered the delegates with a bitter promise to add to the burdens and rough treatment. He made revolt absolutely necessary.

It was the hour for which Jeroboam had waited. The people were so inflamed by the insolent treatment that they were ready for anything. They were at white heat. With the old war cry of Sheba they yelled:

"What share have we in David?

And we have no portion in the son of Jesse.

To your tents, O Israel!

Now look to your house, O David."

Thus the greater part of the kingdom was in open revolt and Rehoboam was being left alone with a small handful of followers.

The chief overseer of forced labor was sent to put down the rebellion and save the kingdom. He was probably hated as much as any man in the kingdom. Instant death was his portion. The people of the North were enraged enough to do anything.

Jeroboam who had been keeping himself behind the scene rather effectively now came forth to assume leadership of the ten tribes. At ancient Shechem he was solemnly anointed king over Israel. He was to rule in the North (Israel), and Rehoboam could keep his little kingdom (Judah) in the South. Secession was in effect. The kingdom was split and ruined. Jeroboam's ambition had finally been realized and the mighty kingdom of David and Solomon was no more. The city of Jerusalem with the Temple was left with the kingdom of Judah.

CAUSES OF THE DIVISION

Several things may be put down as causes of the serious revolt and division: (1) An old jealousy that dated back to the days of the Judges caused constant uneasiness among the people. (2) Solomon's apostasy and his worship of idols served to cause the finer religious element to lose faith in him and to allow their devotion to cool. The people turned away from Jehovah to serve the gods of the Moabites and the Zidonians. (3) The heavy burden of taxation and forced labor broke the spirit of the people and caused them to be bitter in their resentment. This terrific drain of men and money was especially serious in the eyes of the men of the North. They were being robbed of their liberty to build a city in the southern part of the land and keep up the court of a king whom they despised. (4) The selfish ambition of Jeroboam led him to stir up hatred and revolt among the people of the North. It was comparatively easy to cause trouble among people who were so

sorely oppressed. Jeroboam used his opportunity. (5) The incredible shortsightedness of the foolish Rehoboam was the immediate cause. In the face of such foolish treatment, division was inevitable.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE DIVISION

A new order came into being. Instead of one united, powerful kingdom under the iron hand of a despotic dictator, they found themselves with two weak kingdoms constantly at war with one another and attacked from all sides by foes who made bold to assert themselves. Jeroboam in the North had three times as many people, five times as much territory, a more fertile soil, much better military equipment, and a wide-open area not so easily defended. The people of the North were shut off from the Temple and from all religious observance except as Jeroboam arranged. He took pains to start it with golden calves and a priesthood made of volunteers from any of the people. The Levites left his borders and flocked to Jerusalem, thus leaving his land devoid of fervent Jehovah enthusiasts.

Rehoboam in the South did not have much territory or many people, but he had Jerusalem and the holy sanctuary. The city had enjoyed the greater part of the fruits of Solomon's building craze. There was more spiritual power in Judah.

The Northern Kingdom (Israel) lasted for two hundred and nine years with nineteen kings sitting on its throne before it was swept away into exile by the great Assyrian monarch (Sargon II). These kings were all bad in the sense that they did not worship and follow Jehovah. Some of them ruled well from a worldly point of view, but not one of them was able to do anything for Jehovah. Prophets preached to them and God ministered to them, but they continued in sin to the end.

The Southern Kingdom (Judah) continued for three hundred and forty-four years with nineteen kings sitting on the throne in Jerusalem before it was taken into

exile by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. Several of these kings were pious, fervent worshipers of Jehovah and succeeded in drawing the people back to God. The faithful prophets preached and brought special messages from God for each crisis.

It was a dark day, though, when the mighty Kingdom of David and Solomon was broken up and weakened. God's hand was still guiding the destinies of his people, and he could bring order out of chaos and victory out of defeat.

AN ESTIMATE OF SOLOMON

For forty years Solomon was able to hold together the great kingdom that David had built up by years of warfare. It took an iron hand and a keen mind to do it. God gave him the wisdom and the power to continue. Surrounding nations were either beaten off or kept in line by diplomatic alliances. He was both a statesman and a diplomat as well as a dictator.

His contribution to the transformation of a rough military stronghold into the most beautiful city of the land was a real accomplishment. By means of the Temple he gave new dignity and beauty to the worship of Jehovah. His court became one of the wonders of the world.

Under his influence, art and literature flourished. He was responsible for much of the fine teachings of our Book. The Hebrew nation came into a place of importance among the nations of the world. His fine business ability made possible a literal stream of money and gems that flowed in from all directions. Prosperity, luxury, peace, and splendor characterized his reign.

When one looks beneath the surface he is impressed with the reality of disintegrating forces that were at work. Slowly but surely he was destroying the enthusiasm, loyalty, and affection of his subjects. Enslavement, exorbitant taxes, and lack of sympathy for his people were breaking down all the spirit of love and loyalty that

should have been evident on every hand. His pride and ungodly ambition for display led him into an orgy of reckless spending that practically wrecked the country.

Immoral and pagan practices, introduced into his court, put an end to religious fervor, and God's smile of approval was turned away. Solomon lacked the stamina to stand for the faith of his father and to keep the religion of Jehovah clean before the people.

It had been easy, under God's hand, to climb the heights to success. His faith in God, his courage, wisdom, and brilliance, led him to the heights, but he failed miserably when he forgot God and turned to follow his own mad desires. He lacked the solid character to hold the forts he had won. When he died the inevitable crash came.

QUESTIONS

What did Solomon inherit from his father? .

Describe Solomon's auspicious beginning.

What did Solomon build?

Why should he bring one thousand women into his court?

What serious mistakes did Solomon make?

Was he a wise man?

Would you call Solomon a great ruler?

State the facts in Jeroboam's early life.

What happened when Solomon died?*

Name some causes of the division.

OUTLINE

SOLOMON

Scripture for study—1 Kings 1-11 and 2 Chron. 1-9

A Rich Heritage

Son of David—extended and united kingdom—religious life on a high plane—enormous treasures gathered for the building of the Temple

An Auspicious Beginning

Met God in a quiet place—given wisdom and understanding—in favor with God and man

Early Developments

Began to show signs of developing into an autocratic despot—
put aside those who might stand in his way

A Magnificent Court

Tried to make his city and court rival all others—women
brought in—trade routes opened—money poured in

An Extravagant Builder

Built the Temple—using forced labor and exorbitant taxes—his
palace took thirteen years of hard labor—palace for his Egyptian
wife—cities, pools, walls, and gardens built

A Foolish Wise Man

Wisdom given at Gibeon—grew selfish and heartless—became
reckless spender—forgot Jehovah—too many women—heathen
worship and practices

A Great Ruler

Tremendous growth of his kingdom—era of prosperity and
splendor—public works program

Revolts and Trouble

Damascus and Edom throw off the yoke—Jeroboam threatens
to stir up trouble among the people of Israel

The Crisis

At Solomon's death all was lost—Rehoboam foolish and selfish—
Jeroboam ready to take advantage—the people demanding
a change

Some Causes of the Division

An old jealousy between the tribes—Solomon's apostasy—the
heavy burden of taxation—the selfish ambition of Jeroboam—
the foolish act of Rehoboam

Some Consequences of the Division

Division—hatreds—continual fighting—tribes of Israel shut off
from Temple

An Estimate of Solomon

Strong hand to hold David's Kingdom together—built a beautiful
city and a great kingdom—art and literature flourished—
extravagant spender—pagan worship supported—foolish tax
program—forgot God

CHAPTER II

EARLY DAYS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

RIVAL KINGDOMS

The ten tribes in the North under Jeroboam took with them the name "Israel." That had been the name of David's Kingdom and it seems that the seceding tribes should have used a different name, leaving the old name with Rehoboam at Jerusalem. Jeroboam believed in having his own way in such matters and so his kingdom was called "Israel" while Rehoboam's was called "Judah." From 931 B.C. to 722 B.C., these kingdoms existed side by side. During a great part of this time they were fighting with one another and calling in cruel enemies to help wage the war when the going was rough.

JEROBOAM'S RELIGIOUS ZEAL

We may not think of Jeroboam as a man interested in religion, but one of the first things he did was to set up places of worship for his people. We will certainly not approve of the form of worship he made available, but he was anxious to do his part toward giving his people something to worship. His first move was to see that his newly established capital was fortified; he also prepared Peniel, across the Jordan, as a place of safety in time of danger. Since Rehoboam was making war against him, he was forced to put forth his best efforts in defense.

He set up a sanctuary at Dan in the far North and one at Bethel in the extreme South. In each of these sanctuaries he put up the image of a golden bull which, in Semitic religions, was a common symbol of the Deity. Aaron had made calves of gold for the wanderers to worship. These calves symbolized the god of the storm

and of vegetation. Jeroboam seemed to be anxious to have the people worship Jehovah by means of these idols. He was ignorant and unable to appreciate the true spiritual concepts. He had no beautiful temple in his domain. He did not see any need of such a building. He provided means so that his subjects could reach one of these sanctuaries and worship God.

He was anxious to satisfy his people so that they would not attempt to go all the way to Jerusalem to worship. He sought to keep them away from Jerusalem. He could not hope to build up a great kingdom if his people had to go to another land to worship.

In his efforts to win the people, he selected priests from the ranks without any regard for the Levites. This resulted in the withdrawing of many of his best people who went to live in Judah. It also meant that the worship in the North was increasingly secular, idolatrous, and ungodly. The king was more of a warrior and politician than a representative of God in religious matters. The religion of the North reverted to Canaanite paganism. It was a fatal step that launched the kingdom on the toboggan toward ruin.

REHOBAM A WEAK RULER

Early in his career it was made clear that Rehoboam (Solomon's son) was a weakling. In his foolish mistake he lost nearly all of the great kingdom built up by his father and grandfather. Benjamin held to Judah and the city of Jerusalem was in his territory. He had the Temple, and the Levites flocked to him.

During all of his seventeen years, he continued to fight with his brothers of the North. When Jeroboam was driven across the Jordan, he called in his friend Shishak of Egypt who administered a stinging defeat to Rehoboam. In order to save his city, he was forced to bring out all the Temple treasures and all his wealth to buy off the thirsty Pharaoh. It was a serious blow to the hopes of Rehoboam. He did not invade the land

of Israel after this overthrow, but continued to defend his own land.

THE GOOD REIGN OF ASA—(in Judah)

The early days in a corrupt court might have spelled ruin for the young king Asa, but we find him much better than his immediate ancestors. The wars had practically ceased when he came to the throne. It was clear to him that his people were not true to God. Too many idols and idol furniture were visible. It took real courage to begin cleaning up the land. The "pillars," "obelisks," "asherim," "sun images," and "high places" were torn down and destroyed. Such relics of heathenism had no place in Jehovah's land.

His next step was in the direction of building walls, cities, towers, gates, armies, and the kingdom. He believed in preparedness and, even though he was not engaged in a war in his early days, he was doing his best to be ready for the coming clouds.

When Zerah, the Ethiopian, came against him with his million soldiers the outlook was alarming. His little army was trained, equipped, and ready; but what could they hope to do against so many? In answer to earnest prayer, Jehovah came to the rescue and helped the brave soldiers of Asa win a great victory. It was a glorious triumph for God's forces.

On the way home, the victorious army was met by an inspired preacher from God who assured them that they could continue to win victories as long as they were willing to rely upon Jehovah. He reminded them of God's help in the ages past and of his promises for the future. It was a good time for the king to continue his reforms and to put out every vestige of idolatry and heathenism from the land.

The young king accepted the challenge and enlisted his army in a vigorous crusade against idolatry, vice, false practices, and heathen cults. They seemed to fight with the same enthusiasm that they had manifested in the battle against Zerah.

Following the breaking down of all objectionable idol furniture, Asa called the people together for a solemn meeting. Sacrifices were offered and a sacred covenant was made with God. The people were deeply impressed and shouted aloud their vows of allegiance to God. It was a high day in Zion. It seemed that Jehovah's name was to be honored throughout the entire land again.

War clouds appeared again as Baasha, the king of Israel, came against Asa. It was a serious crisis for Judah. The one who had won a victory from the great army of Ethiopia was not equal to the test, and curled up from fright when attacked by Baasha. He resorted to a short-sighted expedient when he called in the army of the Syrians (Damascus) to attack the hosts of Baasha from the rear. The Syrian king was only too glad to take advantage of the opportunity. It gave him a secure hold on all the land. God was sorely displeased with the lack of faith of his king and sent a preacher with a sharp rebuké.

After a long life Asa died of the gout. Instead of calling upon God for help in his trouble, he appealed to the native healers who used incantations and adjurations. He had done much for his kingdom, but some of his policies were exceedingly foolish. He failed in refusing to trust Jehovah.

JEHOSHAPHAT—(of Judah)

Asa's son carried on the good work started by his father. His reign was one of unusual religious activity. Jehoshaphat seemed anxious to consult Jehovah on every occasion. He wanted guidance for every step of his career and openly called on God for the manifestation of his favor. The national worship was purified and made beautiful.

Jehovah blessed him and gave him "riches and honor in abundance." For twenty-five years he led his people into better living and finer citizenship. He inaugurated a system of public instruction for the entire land. A commission composed of priests, Levites, and princes was

appointed to tour the country and teach the people. We do not know how many teachers were used or how long the work continued, but we may be certain that much good was accomplished in ridding his land of ignorance. The Book of the Law was the textbook used.

He built castles, cities, walls, and strong fortifications throughout his territory, and developed his army to a high standing. Judges were appointed to settle difficulties in every locality. It was his aim to make possible a more efficient administration of justice.

It seems that Jehoshaphat was able to control the surrounding nations and collect tribute from them. For the first time since the break at the death of Solomon, peace was made with the inhabitants of the North. Jehoshaphat cultivated Ahab, the king of Israel, and an alliance was effected that put an end to the bitter warfare. The daughter of Ahab and Jezebel was given in marriage to Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat. They thought that would work wonders for the two nations. It practically ruined Judah later because this woman, Athaliah, brought over into Judah her Baal-worship and soon the religious stream was muddy from the introduction of this vile element. The advantage gained politically and materially was more than counterbalanced by this serious invasion of Baal. Dark days loomed for the people of Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat died at the age of sixty, leaving his throne to Jehoram, the young husband of Athaliah.

TROUBLOUS DAYS IN ISRAEL

Following the death of Jeroboam in the North, his son Nadab came to the throne. It soon became evident that the control of the state was not to be in the hands of the civilian population, but in the hands of the military class. The army faction that happened to have control used the power to put in its candidate for the leadership of the country. Poor Nadab lasted only two years. An ambitious army officer named Baasha

was as unscrupulous as he was bold, and murder was easy. The dynasty of Jeroboam was thus brought to an early end when all of the members of Jeroboam's family were murdered by the usurper's orders.

Baasha was vigorous, active, and dynamic. He was soon at war with Asa of Judah. In order to save his own land, it seemed necessary for Asa to call in Benhadad of Syria to attack Baasha. It was the beginning of a series of bitter struggles with the Syrians that so completely exhausted both countries that Assyria could run rough-shod over them.

After twenty-four years of ruling, Baasha died, passing the responsibility to his drunken son Elah who was promptly murdered by Zimri, one of his officers. It was easy to kill all the friends and relatives of Elah and to establish himself on the throne. After one whole week in the royal palace the king was besieged by Omri and the rest of the army. When escape was cut off, Zimri committed suicide by burning the palace over his head. His victory had been short-lived.

Omri reigned for twelve years and did more for the kingdom than any of his predecessors. His outstanding contribution was in the building of the new capital on the hill at Samaria. He thus established his throne on an impregnable hill where he could hope to defend himself against all enemies. It took the trained engineers of Assyria over two years to force their way into the fortress (in 722 B.C.).

Omri made an alliance with the Phoenicians by taking the Sidonian princess, Jezebel, for his son Ahab. It seemed to him a happy diplomatic stroke, but it was destined to cause more trouble than any other move of the century. Jezebel came into the land with her Baal-worship and thoroughly contaminated the people. She came definitely to change the religion of Israel from the simple worship of Jehovah to the worship of Baal and Astarte. Prophets of Jehovah were immediately silenced, and imported priests of the new religion took charge of the religious affairs of the land.

During Omri's day the Syrians were growing stronger and more cruel in their treatment of neighbors. Serious days were ahead for Israel as Damascus armed itself for the bitter struggle. For fifty years the people of the Northern Kingdom suffered from the cruel soldiers of the Syrians.

AHAB AND JEZEBEL

Because we think of the powerful way that Jezebel managed her husband we are apt to lose sight of the strength of the king. We are prejudiced against him, too, because of the rise of the heathen worship during his reign and the persecution of the loyal prophets. As a matter of fact, Ahab was a real general, administrator, and king. As a successful warrior and progressive statesman he built up the kingdom in a real way. His keen business sense was evident in his dealings with the neighboring people. He beautified and fortified his capital and built fine palaces and temples for his wife and her religion. His "ivory palace" was famous for a century.

He and Jehoshaphat "buried the hatchet," and entered into friendly alliance that spelled happier days for the kingdom. Instead of wasting his strength in exhausting wars, he used it in building up trade routes, cities, goodwill, and good government. Wealth was accumulated. Indeed, if riches and material success could be counted as the goal of a nation, Ahab's reign could be counted an unqualified success. Fortunately, there were people in the land who realized that ideals were more important than unlimited wealth. The old faith, the old standard of morality, the old religion, were all breaking down under the low, enervating, degrading life of the luxury-minded people of the land. The base religions from Phœnicia and Canaan were leaving their impression. Jehovah was being forgotten.

Jezebel was guilty of introducing another god to the people of Israel. They had been a people kept apart from

such base influences as the introduction of Baal-worship would necessarily bring. They were not prepared for the system of morals that they were called upon to face. The wicked queen forced the unwilling subjects to renounce their allegiance to Jehovah and become loyal to Baal. If prophets continued to preach, they were silenced. Regular Baal-worship was set up and supported.

Jezebel's character came out clearly in her treatment of Naboth when he refused to sell his vineyard to Ahab. She was unscrupulous enough to demand the murder of the owner of the property so that her husband might have it. It was an easy matter to kill this pious landowner and take the property for the king. Jezebel seemed to enjoy such use of power. She was not at all worried over the wrong perpetrated. The death of an innocent man meant nothing to her. She had won her point and was satisfied.

It was a dark day for Israel when Jezebel came into the royal palace. We have reason to believe that Ahab might have been a good ruler, had it not been for his evil genius. He was forced to follow her lead and commit acts of oppression that were unthinkable. He knew that Solomon had entertained women of all the surrounding nations, and had allowed each to introduce her own religion. Ahab wanted to be friendly to Phœnicia, and he realized that he had to allow Jezebel to do as she pleased. It would take the thundering voice of a great prophet of God to break down the rapid trend toward Baalism. God was preparing a prophet to stand in the breach and save the day for Jehovah religion. The crisis must be met. God was equal to the emergency and in his own good time brought forth his servant to strike a death blow at Baal-worship. Elijah was God's man for the serious moment.

Baal and Jehovah could not exist side by side in the same land, because the controlling spirit of each was irrevocably hostile to the other. Baal was sensual, immoral, autocratic, and lacking in all that was so neces-

sary in the Master of a soul. Jehovah was moral, spiritual, and a jealous God who would tolerate no rival in the affections of his people. The mission of Elijah was to convince the people of Jehovah's right to their best love and to cause them to choose him. It was a day of decision. The challenge was thrown out to them. How would they respond?

QUESTIONS

Tell what you can learn of Jeroboam's policies
 How did he lose the better people of his land?
 Why should we call Rehoboam a weak ruler?
 What did Asa do for his land?
 Name the best things that Jehoshaphat did.
 What was Omri's one contribution?
 How much blame should rest upon the shoulders of Ahab?
 Learn all that you can find concerning Baal and Baal-worship.
 Why did Jezebel hate Jehovah-worship?
 Why was it impossible for Jehovah and Baal to exist side by side in the land?

OUTLINE

EARLY DAYS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

Scripture for study—1 Kings 12-16 and 2 Chron. 10-20

Rival Kingdoms

Ten tribes in the North and two tribes around the City of Jerusalem

Jeroboam's Zeal for Religion

Set up calves at Bethel and Dan—changed the time of the feasts and appointed priests from the ranks

Rehoboam a Weak Ruler

Foolish treatment of the rights of the people—constant war with Israel—no thought for true worship

The Good Reign of Asa

Early reforms—built cities, forts, and a strong army—victory over Zerah—crusade against idols and altars—war with Baasha—disease and death

Jehoshaphat

Prayed to Jehovah for guidance—blessed richly—teachers sent out—built castles, cities, walls, and fortifications—rich tribute from surrounding nations—alliance with Ahab

Troublous Days in Israel

Military class in charge—war with Judah—alliance with Syria—evil days—alliance with Phœnicia

Ahab and Jezebel

Jezebel from Phœnicia, the home of Baal—unprincipled and cruel—Jehovah was to be driven out of the land

CHAPTER III

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

A DISTRESSING SITUATION

The Land of Israel faced a crisis. It had no preacher. Jezebel ruled with an iron hand, and was quietly crushing out any lingering loyalty to Jehovah. The few remaining worshipers of the true God were afraid to show themselves. Ahab was not concerned with the struggle, since it did not make much difference what god was being loved. He would have voted for Jehovah, but it would not have hurt him to see Baal win the election. The people were convinced that Baal was the one who gave them rain, crops, luxury, and good times. They were practically ready to go over bodily to his camp. God was not willing to surrender. Elijah was his answer.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT

As Jezebel, Ahab, and the luxury-loving crowd were lounging in their comfortable palace, they were rudely startled by a crude, rough mountaineer who swooped down upon them with a mysterious pronouncement. God had answered the challenge of Baal by sending one of the most imposing figures of the age. Before that personality kings, courtiers, generals, and statesmen pale into insignificance. He was a physical, spiritual, moral giant who strode into the midst of high society with the courage of his convictions and defied conventions, traditions, kings, and even the wicked Jezebel as he delivered his Master's burning message. His appearance, his garb, his sincerity, his flaming earnestness, and his power as a messenger threw consternation into the gathering. "As Jehovah, the God of Israel lives, whom I serve, there

shall not be dew nor rain these years except according to my word." What a message that was! Each word weighed a ton.

What did he mean? Could he hope to have in his possession the keys to the heavens? How could he control the rains and the dew? He had been praying that a real test might be given so that all the people might know that Baal was not the giver of rain, dew, crops, and fertility. They must realize that a serious drought could come in spite of all of Baal's efforts to supply water. It was a bold prediction, but the preacher had God's word for it and was certain that it could be sustained. Not a drop of moisture would come to the thirsty earth until the word was spoken by Elijah. Months would pass, and each day would only add to the mysterious solemnity of the word of the fearless prophet from Gilead. They were to face starvation, destitution, and death for a long spell in order that Jehovah's power might be revealed.

BY THE BROOK CHERITH

Before the dumfounded group could seize the prophet, he was away. Without leaving a trace, he concealed himself by a friendly brook probably on the east side of the Jordan. There would be plenty of time before Ahab and his people understood all the message and learned its lessons. At any rate he could be certain of protection from Ahab, and food to sustain life. He was under orders and had faith to believe in Jehovah's power and love. He knew that God would honor and care for his faithful servant.

Food was miraculously furnished, but he was dependent upon the brook for his water-supply. It was a real test of faith when he watched the steady decrease in the water. God was keeping his word in withholding rain from the earth, and his own drinking water was gradually giving out. What would he do when the waters ceased? How could he live without water? The prophet must have learned much from those days of watchful waiting. God became even more real to him as he became more

dependent upon him. Solitude helps us, but solitude brightened by the presence of God works wonders in the building of character.

IN ZAREPHATH

Before suffering came to the loyal soldier, a new command came from his Lord. He was ordered to move entirely across the land of Israel and live for a season at Zarephath. On this journey he would pass through Jezebel's territory and into the land of Phœnicia from which that terrible queen came. In other words, he was to face danger and possible death on a journey that would end in a small city by the sea near Jezebel's old home.

Following Jehovah's leading, he came to the home of a poor widow in Zarephath. When she did all within her power to help feed the stranger, she was miraculously blessed. Jehovah continued to care for his prophet and also the one who had so graciously offered to help.

The long sojourn in that foreign home was a good discipline for God's man. The people of Israel were suffering from the worst drought of their time, but the loyal soldier of God was cared for, protected, and made ready for his future work. His faith was strengthened for the real crisis.

The son of his hostess died and was restored to life under the inspired touch of the servant of God. It was a signal victory that was allowed as a sure token of Jehovah's actual presence and power. After that significant event, Elijah must have been strong enough for any further word of command. His God was sufficient.

MEETING WITH AHAB

It took a great deal of courage to obey the divine voice and go out to meet the king of Israel. For three years that king had done his best to find the rough old preacher who had caused so much trouble. During all these years the ground had become harder and more desolate.

The crops had failed. The horses and mules were dying. An entire nation was suffering, and the king was mad. It was preposterous to think that a mere man should cause so much trouble in Israel.

With characteristic courage the prophet strode forth to find the king. Obadiah, a faithful steward of the king, was the first to meet Elijah. During the prophet's absence Obadiah had been saving the lives of many scores of loyal preachers.

When Ahab was called he came with much noise and clatter. At last he had found the man whom he wanted to punish! Such a man needed severe punishment. Had not he been a disturber of the entire people? Had he not caused a whole nation to suffer? He found his match in the rugged man of God. Instead of heaping punishment upon the offender, the king felt the severe whip fall upon himself. Elijah was more than a match for Ahab. He charged all the suffering of the people to the wickedness of the king and the group of sinners in his house.

Elijah gave a sharp command to the king. "Send out and gather to me all Israel to Mount Carmel, together with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal who eat at Jezebel's table." What could a mere king do when confronted by one who held the keys to the heavens? How could he deny the request of the one who had caused his land to suffer for three years? The time had come for a convincing test. The people were hungry and thirsty and humbled. It was God's time to drive home a never-to-be-forgotten lesson.

THE CONTEST ON MOUNT CARMEL

Ahab did his duty, and the people came to the top of Carmel in great numbers. The prophets of Baal were there, even though Jezebel did not accompany them. The multitude stood ready to hear the famous man, and to render a decision on the basis of the facts presented in the test. Having suffered enough, they were ready to listen to reason.

Elijah took charge of the meeting immediately, throwing down a challenge to every listener to make up his mind and come out boldly for Jehovah or Baal. He promised a fair contest that would make clear to every rational mind the true Lord to worship. Let them watch closely, think clearly, and choose wisely.

He then threw out his invitation to the prophets of Baal. Let them call upon their god and let him send fire in answer to their requests. Let them convince the people by showing what their god could do under pressure.

An altar was built, an offering placed upon it, and the prophets of Baal were invited to call on their god for proof. From morning until noon the prophets worked and called frantically. Baal did not answer. Elijah taunted them with ironical remarks: "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey; perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." This drove the dervishes to even wilder demonstrations. They leaped and danced and cut themselves until the blood spurted from many open wounds.

When they had failed, Elijah prepared for the real demonstration. The old altar to Jehovah was repaired, a trench was made around it, the bullock was laid on the wood, and plenty of water was poured over the entire altar. The true prophet knew his God and *knew* that he was going to answer. He prayed: "Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God." The answer came in a flash of lightning consuming the offering and the sacrifice. The people shouted, "Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God." It was a glorious victory for Elijah and for the Eternal One. Surely there could not be any further question!

PRAYER ANSWERED

After promising Ahab that the three years' drought was about to be broken, Elijah went into a quiet place on Carmel to plead with Jehovah for the promised rain.

His servant was sent to look out over the sea for evidences of rain, but continued to return to his master with the same discouraging report. In the face of such reports, and while looking upon a sky that looked like brass, the preacher continued to pray for rain. Finally, such prevailing faith won the victory. A cloud the size of a hand was seen over the sea. It was enough. Rain was coming! God had heard and answered! His name was honored among men. How could any one doubt any longer?

Baal had been revealed as impotent in his own land and also in the very element in which he had been thought the strongest. Jehovah had really demonstrated his right to the undivided allegiance of the nation, "But it takes more than a rain storm to break up a nation's bad habits." Elijah was to learn in a tragic manner that the victory was far from won. Temporary defeat was lurking just around the corner to trip the elated messenger of Jehovah.

RUNNING FROM JEZEBEL

In the strength of these victories, Elijah plunged down the mountainside for twenty-two miles to receive the plaudits of the multitudes. Even Ahab's chariot was too slow for him. Surely Jezebel and her husband would now bow to him and honor him publicly! Certainly there could be no question of any remaining loyalty to Baal! His prophets were all dead and his cause dishonored. At the palace gate he waited for the thrilling invitation.

Jezebel had no notion of surrender. She realized that Elijah had captured the popular fancy and that it would not be wise to punish him openly. She decided to scare him so much that he would run completely away and leave the field open for Baal's recuperation. Her threat was sufficient, and Elijah started on his long three hundred-mile journey. It was more than one hundred miles to Beersheba where he left his servant and then at least two hundred miles farther to Horeb where he received his new commission.

Why did he run away? Surely he had seen too many demonstrations of Jehovah's power and presence to fear a mere woman! For once Elijah seemed to get away without seeking guidance. He was tired, and he relaxed. Like most enthusiasts he had reacted to the other extreme. He was completely discouraged, and in this state it was easy to be frightened. The murderous message came at exactly the right moment to cause him to lose what little courage and good sense he had. He had no reserves left to put into action except some physical strength that came to him in the crisis and caused his tired legs to respond. Southward from Jezreel and onward through the land of Judah he fled, thinking of escape from a wicked queen. We cannot see how he covered the distance of one hundred miles to Beersheba but one can often do more than seems possible when fear holds the reins. The old prophet's servant fell by the way at Beersheba, but he himself did not dare stop until he had plunged farther into the wilderness.

GOD'S GRACIOUS CARE

The same God who had provided food and water at Cherith and Zarephath was waiting at the juniper tree as his exhausted preacher collapsed. The same God who had given him the victory on Carmel was now ready to nourish and sustain his servant who had run away from Israel, but who had not drifted beyond Jehovah's love and tender care.

He was so thoroughly exhausted and depressed that he did not care to live. Suicide was in his mind. After all, why should he live, since Jezebel had full power to thwart every move? In his depression he lost sight of the fact that Jehovah was more powerful than Jezebel.

Jehovah gave plenty of refreshing sleep as his first contribution to the poor fellow. After the rest he was awakened by the call to breakfast. A divinely-prepared meal was necessary before reason could be found. When he became a bit more rational, it was easy for God to lead him to understand that he was to go on into the

wilderness, even to Mount Horeb (Sinai). Greater and richer revelations would be given to him in the quiet place of the sacred mount.

REVELATION AT HOREB

In the sacred atmosphere of Sinai, where the Law had been given to Moses, it was possible for the prophet to find not only physical satisfaction but a spiritual experience that transformed his whole life. God allowed him to open his lips and tell all that had been heavy on his heart. All the complaints, doubts, discouragements, failures, and disappointments were poured out. Then the stormy wind, the terrifying earthquake, and the fire came to still his heart and turn his thoughts from himself to the might and majesty of the Eternal One. He knew that only God could do the things that had just been done. Quietly and reverently he waited for the divine manifestation.

As he paused in the quiet aftermath, the air seemed radiant with God's blessed sunlight. The wind, the quaking, and the fire had gone. God was there. The "still small voice" brought its message to Elijah. He was stilled by the mysterious "steppings of Jehovah," and at last seemed willing to obey the divine call.

THE NEW COMMISSION

The call came to him to go back to Jezebel's land to do some specific work for Jehovah. He was to anoint Hazael to be king in Syria, Jehu to be king in Israel, and Elisha to be a prophet to carry on his work after him. It was a great experience to realize that God really needed him and was planning to use him again. Jezebel would not be able to harm him if he were on a mission for Jehovah. It was a task that might stagger a young man, but the old veteran rallied under the call and prepared to do God's will.

Thus, God, by his wise dealing with his preacher, saved him from despondency, grief, fear, and a desire for death.

He solved the problem by revealing himself to him and then challenging him with a mighty call to definite work. Elijah marched away from Sinai with a new spring in his step, a new joy in his heart, a new light in his eyes, and a new work to do for his Lord.

AT NABOTH'S VINEYARD

It was a different man who met Ahab as he inspected his new vineyard. With all of the fire and courage of the great reformer that he was, he attacked the king for his wickedness and injustice. He poured into the ear of Ahab the burning charge of Jehovah. The prediction of disgrace and death for the whole family was delivered to the shrinking man. We admire the preacher who so fearlessly spoke to the king. He definitely linked religion with social justice. The ethical and democratic nature of Jehovah's religion was put before Ahab and all peoples. The king repented and prayed for forgiveness with such genuineness that the sentence was delayed for a number of years. Elijah had "come back" with such a tremendous pressure that we are made to rejoice as we listen to the voice of the courageous prophet.

THE CALL OF ELISHA

One of God's definite commands to Elijah was to find and call a young man named Elisha. It must have been a real joy for the older man to find and throw his mantle over the plowboy and to look forward to the days when the two should walk together as God's prophets. The young man was in the field with twelve pairs of oxen under his supervision. He understood fully the significance of the strange behavior of Elijah and went immediately into the work. For months, and possibly years, the youthful Elisha walked with and ministered to the older prophet. It was a great opportunity for him to learn at the feet of a noble teacher the hidden things of the kingdom.

As the two worked together during these years, much thought and effort were given to the organization and development of the theological schools for the training of future leaders. It was a significant movement in the land. God was richly blessing these two servants of his.

ELIJAH TAKEN HOME WHILE ELISHA LEADS ON

After a long life of usefulness the time came for the old preacher to go home. His young follower kept very close to him as they visited the bands of prophets at Bethel and Jericho. Crossing the Jordan, they made their way to the hills of Moab near the spot where Moses had been taken. Suddenly and without warning the chariot came and the master was borne away to rest with his God. His mantle fell upon the young prophet and the Spirit of God led him back to take up the work of preaching, teaching, and building for God. Jehovah's fiery champion was gone from the earth, but the plans of God were to be carried on by the gentle, kind, constructive builder who took up where Elijah left off and built wisely for his Lord.

Elisha became the respected friend and adviser of kings. He was given the task of making effective in the political and social life of Israel the fundamental principles put forth by Elijah. He practically completed the elimination of all forms of Baal-worship from the land.

He became the wonder-worker of Israel. God gave him miraculous power that he might do acts of mercy for many helpless and needy people. His healing of the great Naaman stands out as his most notable miracle.

By anointing Jehu king of Israel, he carried out Jehovah's orders to Elijah, and put into office the one who exterminated the remaining members of the house of Ahab. Jezebel and all of her tribe were put to death.

Jehovah used these two prophets through many years to put down Baal-worship and evil practices, and to enthrone his blessed name in the land as the only God. Our hats are off to Elijah and Elisha!

QUESTIONS

Sketch the career of Jezebel.

How could Elijah claim such authority as he did in his first announcement to Ahab?

What did Elijah learn at Cherith?

Describe the contest on Mt. Carmel.

What did Elijah expect following the victory?

What would Jezebel have done to Elijah?

Why did Elijah want to die?

How did God minister to him?

Tell of the challenge that God had for Elijah.

Why did Ahab need a sermon at Naboth's vineyard?

Describe the call of Elisha.

What work did Elisha accomplish?

OUTLINE

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

Scripture for study—1 Kings 17-22; 2 Kings 1-9

A Distressing Situation

Jezebel and Baal-worship in the saddle—people going bodily away from Jehovah

A Startling Announcement

Elijah's message to court of Ahab—rain and dew to be stopped until the prophet should speak

By the Brook Cherith

Food, water, and shelter provided under God's direction

At Zarephath

In Jezebel's territory he works miracles to do God's will

Meeting with Ahab

Definite message to the sinful king—call for special meeting of all people

The Contest on Mount Carmel

The challenge to the people—the contest—the failure of the prophets of Baal—victory for Jehovah—prophets of Baal killed

Prayer Answered

Rain given as definite answer to prayer of the faithful preacher

Running from Jezebel

Weak, disappointed, fearful—he flees to Beersheba—to Juniper tree

God's Gracious Care

The tender care and mercy of God in a crisis—refreshed to plunge farther into the wilderness

God's Revelation at Horeb

Quietly God prepared him for the message

The New Commission

Called to go back home—to anoint Jehu as king of Israel, Hazael as king of Syria, and Elisha as prophet

At Naboth's Vineyard

Ahab met and denounced for his wickedness—doom of Ahab's house sealed

Call of Elisha

The young farmer-boy called and set apart to carry on God's work in the land

Translation of Elijah While Elisha Leads On

Beyond the Jordan, the two were separated—Elisha left to become the builder, teacher, constructive leader of the people during many years

CHAPTER IV

A CENTURY OF TURMOIL

A NEW START

In the year 842 B.C., a new king came to the throne of Syria, of Israel, and also of Judah. Jehu killed the king of Judah and the king of Israel, while Hazael smothered the king of Syria. Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, took over the government in Judah, Jehu reigned in Israel, and Hazael in Syria.

THE DARING OF JEHU

God had predicted that the house of Ahab must fall. A young soldier, Jehu, heard the prophet Elijah tell Ahab about the calamity that was to come. Years passed and Ahab's son came to the throne for two years. He in turn was followed by Jehoram for twelve years. Elisha knew that Jehovah was tired of the house of Ahab and had left orders for Jehu to be anointed king.

To carry out the divine will, he sent a young theological student to anoint Jehu and start him out on his work as king. Jehu and his followers were elated over the developments and rode off rapidly to finish the work. Ahaziah, the king of Judah, was in Israel visiting his cousin Jehoram, the king of Israel. When Jehu rode into town, it was an easy matter for him to put both kings to death. He had himself proclaimed king in the North and set out immediately to exterminate all the house of Ahab. Jezebel was one of his first victims. He seemed to take peculiar delight in driving his chariot over the broken form of the haughty queen. She had caused enough trouble, bringing calamity upon her family, upon the nation, and ultimately upon herself. Divine retribution had come.

The two kings had been shot on the very spot where Elijah had delivered his message concerning God's displeasure because of the treatment of Naboth. The dogs licked the blood and ate the flesh of Jezebel. Every one of the descendants of Ahab who was left in the land was cruelly slain. Jehu was leaving no stone unturned. He was to rule as an oriental despot. He excused some of his cruel acts by claiming that he was merely carrying out the definite prophecy of Elijah. He was doing God's will in bringing destruction to the house of Ahab.

THE MASSACRE OF BAAL-FOLLOWERS

The mighty work of driving Baal from the land was begun by Elijah and continued by Elisha. It remained for Jehu to put on the finishing touches. He made up his mind that he would uproot every vestige of Baalism from the land. By a clever stratagem he gathered every follower of Baal into the temple erected to Baal for a great sacrifice. From all over the land they came to join in the great meeting. All Jehovah-followers were expelled from the room, and then the slaughter began. Eighty armed executioners did their bloody work so thoroughly that not a man escaped. The temple and all of its furniture were burned and the place cursed. It was a bloody massacre, but it was Jehu's way of doing the thing. The Baal-worshipers were disloyal to Jehovah and therefore traitors to the state. At any rate, the land was never bothered by Baal again.

JEHU'S TROUBLES

Even though Jehu had started out with such a reckless display of power and courage, he came during his later days to feel the cruel hand of the invaders. The great king of Assyria (Shalmanezar) came up from the far Northeast with a mighty army against the peoples of Palestine. Jehu had murdered practically all the young leaders, and was not able to put a creditable army in the field to aid Hazael of Syria in his efforts to repel

the Assyrian invasion. In order to save his land, Jehu decided to buy off the invader with gold, silver, and precious gifts. It was a serious moment when Israel began to buy her freedom from enemies. It meant that she would have to continue it all through the years. It was an open confession of weakness before the whole world.

Hazael was exceedingly bitter towards Jehu as a result of his actions. When Shalmanezzer had gone back to Assyria, Hazael began seeking revenge. Israel was punished severely by the fine army of Syria. Cities were burned, young men slaughtered, women butchered, and babies crushed before parents' eyes. All the land of Israel on the east side of the Jordan river was lost. The bitter struggle continued all the days of Jehu and for practically thirty years following his death.

Jehu was a strong, resolute, rough, unscrupulous man whom Jehovah used in one of the most strategic periods of Israel's history. His reign was bathed in blood and strewn with wreckage all the way. His latter days were unhappy ones because of the serious opposition of enemies and because of the loss of prestige and the decline in prosperity among his own people. His work was significant. His character was not without serious blot. He will not allow us to forget him.

THE WICKED ATHALIAH

Athaliah, Jezebel's daughter, was queen in Judah during the reign of her husband, Jehoram, and queen mother during the reign of her son, Ahaziah. She had come to Jerusalem to live when the alliance had been perfected by Jehoshaphat and Ahab. She inherited her mother's strength of will and gave evidence of a fanatical zeal for Baal-worship. Being much stronger than her husband, it was easy to force him to murder six of his brothers and several of the other princes of the realm.

When her husband died she was still the dominant force in the kingdom, while her son, Ahaziah, sat on the

throne. That reign lasted only one year, for Jehu put an end to the career of Ahaziah.

Athaliah was so fanatical, wicked, and unscrupulous that she was willing to resort to a bloody massacre in order to satisfy her thirst for power. She was willing to murder her own grandsons. When the blood was cleaned away, she took her place on the throne, not knowing that the baby boy (Jehoash) was kept alive by his aunt Jehosheba, the wife of the priest. For six years he was kept safely in the Temple in the private apartment of Jehoiada, while the wicked woman ruled in Jerusalem. She must have been a woman of extraordinary genius to have occupied the throne of David for these years.

Baal-worship was being crushed to death in Israel, but it was thriving in Jerusalem. Jezebel and her followers were put to death by Jehu, but Athaliah was giving Baal a stronghold in David's capital. The Temple of Jehovah was not only neglected but seems to have been partially wrecked to provide material for a temple to Baal (2 Chron. 24: 7).

Jehoiada and Jehosheba were in full charge of the Temple, and evidently Athaliah did not visit them in their apartment. While the boy, Jehoash, was growing the priest was laying his plans for the overthrow of the usurper. The people were tiring of her and were ready for just the relief that was promised. The plot was carefully laid and the execution was perfect.

The boy (Jehoash) was introduced to the soldiers and crowned as the new king in David's dynasty. The people were wild in their acclaim of the boy-king. Athaliah heard the shouting and came to investigate, only to meet the death that she so richly deserved. Thus came to an end the career of one of the worst characters that Jerusalem knew.

JEHOASH (JOASH) AND HIS REFORMS IN JUDAH

It is well to remember that the young king was a grandson of Athaliah and Jehoram. How could he hope to be worth anything in the world? When all the other

grandsons were slain, the infant was kept safely in the Temple of God. His friends knew the one place in the city that would not be visited by the usurper. It was during those formative years that the boy was under the tutelage of the good old priest, Jehoiada. Too much credit cannot be given to that pious old couple, Jehoiada and Jehosheba, who saved the boy and brought him up in God's house.

After his coronation he was still a child, and needed the guidance of a stronger hand. Jehoiada was the ruler during those early years, and began instigating some necessary reforms. We may be sure that it was quite a task to rid the city of the guards and officials who had been instruments of Athaliah. The city government was as corrupt as it is possible to imagine.

As the youngster grew into manhood, he showed evidences of his fine religious training. He leaned heavily upon the wisdom of the priest, and tried to do God's will. He was especially interested in the Temple, and sought to prepare it for worship again after all the abuses it had suffered.

He called for contributions, and requested the priests to assume responsibility for the collection of the money and for the repairing of the building. After a number of years had passed, he found that the priests had been using all the money for themselves and that the Temple was not being repaired.

Jehoash devised the plan of a box with a hole bored in its lid and placed where all good givers might deposit their contributions. At stated intervals the box was to be opened by two appointed officials who should use the money as directed by the king. The expedient proved brilliantly successful. The money poured in. The repairs were made, and the people were again happy in the worship of Jehovah. They had plenty of money in the treasury for the purchase of new vessels to replace the ones taken away in former days.

As long as the good old priest lived, all went well, and Jehoash ruled wisely. He gave much attention to the

purification of the worship and the destruction of idols. When Jehoiada died, a sudden change was manifest. The wicked princes came to the king demanding a change which would allow idolatry, heathen rites and altars, and a lowering of existing standards of morality. Jehoash was weak enough to allow them to have their way. Soon the heathenish party was ruling again. Zechariah, the high priest who succeeded his father, Jehoiada, to the office, came out boldly against the new deal but was unable to stem the tide that was running out.

Jehoash ordered the execution of the priest for his opposition to the new order. Such ingratitude and folly has seldom been seen among men. Surely he could have been more kind to the son of his benefactor and friend! It was an act that could never be explained. Zechariah's dying words were, "Jehovah look upon it, and require it." Such a blot should never have been brought upon the name of the one who was saved from death and brought up to be a king in Jerusalem.

The closing years of the life of Jehoash were filled with troubles and miseries. Hazael of Damascus came with a strong army and subdued all the land of Palestine except Jerusalem. In order to save his city, Jehoash collected every available piece of gold and silver and sent it to the greedy Syrian. He withdrew from the land, but left the kingdom in bad condition.

The king's failure in his religious program and in the affairs of state caused a great wave of hatred to sweep the country. Feeling against him ran high. Even his physical sufferings failed to win sympathy for him, and he was brutally assassinated by his own officers as he slept in the stronghold at Millo. They took his body to Jerusalem, but he was not given a place in the royal sepulchers.

THE PROPHET JOEL

It is probable that Joel came to preach to the people of Jerusalem during the early days of king Jehoash. The

and was suffering severely from the worst drought and the worst locust plague that any of them had ever remembered. It was a serious time when priests, husbandmen, drunkards, and even the beasts of burden were joining their piteous cries of distress and thirst. Death was lurking just around the corner for all of them unless relief came.

Joel had a remedy to suggest. Let every man, woman, and child come together in a solemn assembly to seek God's will and to repent of their sins. It was a genuine call to repentance. Nothing short of that would satisfy Jehovah. Sin had held sway long enough. God was thoroughly disgusted with his people and had brought these afflictions upon them. "Yet even now, saith Jehovah, turn to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2: 12, 13 ASV).

Between 2: 17 and 2: 18 we must suppose a scene in which Jehovah heard the prayers of the prophet and his people, and we are told of the blessings which were promised to repentant suppliants. Material and spiritual blessings were promised in abundance. The locusts would die and the rains would come to guarantee abundant vegetation. The Spirit of God was to be poured out in rich measure upon all the people. Not only at Pentecost was this blessed promise fulfilled.

Joel's message bore fruit and caused the people to turn to their God with a genuine prayer for help. God heard and answered. We are indebted to Joel for his challenging call. We need his message in our own day. What a blessing it would be if our people who are called by his name would humble themselves and pray and seek his face and turn away from their wicked ways! They could expect all the rich blessings which were promised by Joel.

TWO GREAT MONARCHS

Following the death of Jehoash of Judah, the throne was in the hands of Amaziah, his son. He was a very foolish young man who won a victory over the Edomites and brought the conquered idols back to be set up as his gods. Being puffed up with pride, he challenged the king of Israel to a battle only to suffer a very humiliating defeat and to lose all of his valuables that were worth taking away. His own people turned against him and he was killed.

Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel reigned side by side for nearly a half century. It was a period of prosperity, luxury, and plenty. Neighboring nations were weak and were soon paying tribute to these kings. Syria had given endless trouble for fifty years, but had now lost her hold in the West. We shall do well to study the fine work of these two monarchs who meant so much to the two kingdoms during the eighth century. They were able during their reigns to restore the territories of Israel and Judah to their extent in the days of David and Solomon. It was an era of unprecedented tranquillity and prosperity. Every sign pointed to a long-continued age of happiness and peace.

Uzziah reigned in Jerusalem for forty years, and spent his time driving back enemies, capturing outposts (including the important seaport), building walls, cities, vineyards, aqueducts, and doing much to improve the living conditions of his people. In every phase of the work he was exceptionally helpful. Wealth began to pour into his land, and a strong class of nobles began to grow powerful. As wealth accumulated, religion came to have a harder time. Men forgot God when they became independent.

Jeroboam II reigned in Samaria for about forty years and performed in much the same way that his Judean contemporary did. He was a great warrior, and was able in a short while to extend the boundaries to their farthest limit. The power of Damascus was broken.

Edom, Moab, and Ammon were once more in the hands of the Israelites. Prosperity came in with the returning tides of trade. Palaces and public buildings were built and furnished lavishly for the pleasure-mad people.

AN UNWILLING MISSIONARY

Jonah preached during the days of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14: 25) and predicted the unrivaled prosperity of the king. When God disturbed him with a call to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, with a message of doom, he was unwilling to go. His work was all that he wanted. He did not want to be a foreign missionary. He hated the Assyrians and did not want to see them spared. They were bitter enemies and nothing could please him better than news of their destruction.

When he sought freedom by fleeing toward the West he was caught, convicted, punished, and miraculously preserved by a loving God who does not like disobedience. He learned that it was not so easy to refuse to do God's will. He learned, too, that God's power was absolute.

It was much easier for him to go to Nineveh to carry God's ultimatum after the submarine journey. The message that he preached had an electric effect upon the people of that heathen city. They repented and complied fully with the divine requirement. Jonah was sorely displeased because God did not carry out his announced purpose to destroy the Assyrians. His narrow, selfish disposition showed itself in his ugly conduct. God had to teach him a missionary lesson by revealing his love for all men everywhere. The fact that they were of another nation did not cause God to cease loving them. He was only too glad to spare and care for them.

God cared enough for a heathen city to send one of his greatest preachers to preach to them. He accepted their repentance just as he accepted the cry of his own chosen people. Surely we may catch a glimpse of Jehovah's love for the people of China, Japan, India, Africa, and the other countries of the world! May we

be brought to love them as he loves, and do our part in the work of warning and wooing the peoples of the earth! The same God expects obedience from us and will honor our witnessing and save those who will repent and believe upon him.

QUESTIONS

- Give the principal events in the life of Jehu.
- How did Jehu stamp out Baalism?
- Who was Athaliah? What did she do?
- How did Jehoiada help?
- Describe the reforms of Jehoash.
- What was Joel's chief challenge?
- What did Uzziah and Jeroboam II do?
- From what did Jonah seek to flee?
- How can you account for the conversion of the great city?
- What lessons may we learn from the Book of Jonah?

OUTLINE

A CENTURY OF TURMOIL

Scripture for study—2 Kings 9-14; 2 Chron. 22-26

The Daring of Jehu

Jehu present when Elijah predicted doom of Ahab's house—
anointed by order of Elisha—wild ride to Jezreel—two kings
and Jezebel murdered—established as king of Israel

Baal-Followers Massacred

Trapped in place of worship and murdered

Days of Trouble for Jehu

Assyria and Syria trouble him

The Wicked Athaliah

Jezebel's daughter as unscrupulous as her wicked mother—the
seed royal murdered—wild reign of six years in Jerusalem—
put to death by order of Jehoiada, the priest

Jehoash and His Reforms

Kept safely by Jehoiada and Jehosheba for six years—guided
by the good priest—reforms in city and country—Temple
repaired—serious lapse after death of Jehoiada—murdered by
his own servants

The Prophet Joel

His prophecy occasioned by a serious drought and swarms of locusts—his call to repentance and prayer—God's promises of material and spiritual gifts

Uzziah and Jeroboam

These great kings brought prosperity, peace, and plenty to the two kingdoms

An Unwilling Missionary

Jonah called to go to Nineveh—his disobedience brought disaster—preserved by Jehovah—effective preaching—Nineveh repented—Jonah disappointed

CHAPTER V

AMOS AND HOSEA

INTRODUCTION

During the days of Jeroboam II and Uzziah, there came upon the scene two of the most interesting characters of the whole era. These two prophets were called of God to preach to people who were growing richer and more worldly with every passing day. Kings, princes, priests, and people were all corrupt and needed a call from one of God's messengers to set them right again.

THE HERDSMAN OF TEKOA (760 B.C.)

Amos grew up and labored in southern Judah about twelve miles from Jerusalem. His work as a follower of sheep and a dresser of sycamore trees kept him in the open and also secluded from the outside world. We do not know how he was trained or how he came to know so much about the world situation. He tells us that he was called from the field and the hand of God was heavy upon him as he went to carry the message to sinners.

He disclaimed membership in the prophetic guilds and claimed that he was a special envoy of Jehovah who had been drafted for definite service. The bands of prophets were not in good standing with the thinking people.

We may be sure that his rough, meager fare, his hard toil, his constant fight with cruel circumstances, and his communion with God, helped to make him ready for the crisis. He was a thorough student of world affairs. Assyria, Egypt, Syria, Edom, Ammon, and Phœnicia were known to him, and the hidden mysteries seemed to

be clear to him. History was an open book and the existing conditions of his day were not hidden from him. He was a world citizen who could think clearly, speak courageously, and interpret God's will without fear. He had graduated from God's university.

His call into the service was the most important event in his life. It was Jehovah's definite commission to go under divine compulsion to the designated spot with a definite message. God came upon him to give him new powers of discernment and discrimination. Prediction was possible for him as well as power of interpretation and application. He was God's man.

THE FESTIVAL AT BETHEL

Just twenty-two miles north of Tekoa was Bethel, the principal open-air shrine of Israel. Jeroboam had set up calf-worship there in 931 B.C. When Amos was directed to go on a special mission to Bethel, it was a big feast day. Pilgrims were there from all parts of the land with their fine clothes, rich offerings, loud music, and festive airs. The priests, dressed in the most beautiful robes, chanted weird melodies, while their assistants worked feverishly to kill, prepare, and offer the innumerable sacrifices. Altars reeked with the blood of bulls and goats. Burning flesh left its peculiar aroma on every side. Everybody was bent on having a good time and offering the best sacrifice possible. The people were exceedingly religious. The high priest was happy that they were having such a successful day.

THE STRANGE INTRUDER

Into this happy, carefree, sinful group, the strange prophet from Tekoa walked. It seemed too bad that such a gathering had to be interrupted. When he began to speak, the people welcomed him as a novel sort of entertainer who would probably provide a bit of amusement for the crowd. They gathered around to listen. How could a preacher hope to make any impression on such a group of people? They were not in any mood

to listen to rebuke and warning. How could the awkward country preacher grip their attention and hold them long enough to preach to them a needed message? Let us watch him as he reveals his extraordinary power as a speaker. Let us watch the crowd as they are skillfully caught in his net and held while the chastisement is administered. Amos is an artist of the rarest sort.

THE CHARGE AGAINST THE NATION

He began by turning his guns on Damascus. Jehovah was against Syria and would bring ruin upon her because of cruel acts of barbarism. In quick succession he turned upon the other neighbors—Philistia, Ammon, Moab, and Edom. Each was condemned for shameless acts of atrocity and impiety that violated every rule of war. For each of these offenders Jehovah was preparing a measure of doom that would fit the offense. We may well imagine the shouts of approval that came as a result of this castigation of the neighbors. In each case the Israelites hated the enemy nation, and would take peculiar delight in the sudden destruction of its capital city.

In addition to these enemy nations, Amos brought a specific charge against Judah, and announced doom as the certain portion of that land. Judah had failed miserably in living up to the standard that had been set for her. In spite of prophets, laws, teachings, miraculous interventions, and divine blessings, Judah had continued in sin.

THE SUDDEN TURN UPON ISRAEL

The master artist had a grip on them that could not be broken. They were ready to vote him the greatest preacher of the age, when suddenly he turned and confronted them with charges more serious and deadly than all the others combined. They could not move away. They simply stood and took his terrific broadside against

them. They were even more guilty than their less enlightened neighbors. They must be held to a higher standard. They were God's elect nation. That election carried with it terrific responsibility and dread consequences.

The very people who were parading their piety were guilty of oppressing the poor, of drunkenness, injustice, covetousness, lasciviousness, sacrilege, usury, unchastity, enslavement of fellow Hebrews, and rejecting the messages of Jehovah. The courts were venal, the rich were rapacious, the women were heartless and selfish in their ungodly demands upon their men. Amos called the carousing women "cows of Bashan." Debauchery, extortion, reckless waste, unbridled passions, heartless cruelty, unjust dealings, corrupt judges, and vile thoughts, all came under the swift blows of the inspired orator. Jehovah had stirred him to action. He could not refrain from speaking. The groans of the suffering masses fired him with a new fervor. The champion of the people's rights was roaring forth God's message of doom.

CERTAIN CAPTIVITY PREDICTED

Amos was able to see clearly the certain punishment that was about due. He knew that God had reached the end of his patience. The idols, altars, ivory palaces, and the idle loafers were to perish together. The eternal God who had created and moved nations was about to manifest his power. Righteousness had reached its limit of endurance. The people could not expect to be spared in the face of such sins and failures. God was raising up a destroyer who would bring terrible punishment.

A GREAT CHALLENGE

In the face of such dire calamity, the prophet was strangely moved. He could not see his people rushed away into exile without an effort to win them. His call to repentance and godly living was sincere, earnest, and powerful. He challenged them to be done with bribery, debauchery, injustice, false living, and turn to God

with all their hearts. He wanted righteousness in public and private life. "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." Such a call should have challenged the best in the hearts of the men of Israel. Amos could see out of the ruins of the old state, a new state arising with the smile of Jehovah upon it. "The fallen hut of David" would be restored in all of its old glory.

OPPOSED BY AMAZIAH, THE PRIEST

It was more than the hireling priest could stand. He must have been embarrassed beyond words for some time before he found an opportunity to speak. He resented the attacks from the rude intruder. There was too much truth in his words for comfort. Finally, Amos gave him an opening when he said, "Jehovah shall rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." He sent a messenger to the king, denouncing Amos as a traitor. "Amos has conspired against you. For thus speaks Amos, 'By the sword shall Jeroboam die, and Israel shall go away into captivity out of its land.'"

Immediately he turned upon the preacher and ordered him to leave the country. With a sneer he accused Amos of being a member of one of the discredited groups of "prophets" who talked for money. "Off with you to Judah! Earn your bread there, and there play the prophet. But at Bethel you shall prophesy no more; for it is the king's sanctuary and the royal residence." It was one of the most significant encounters of all religious history. The priestly champion of aristocratic privilege stood over against the one man of God who calmly demanded ethical and social reform.

Amos indignantly denied the charges of being a selfish prophet after easy money. He claimed to be Jehovah's special messenger to chastise just such an hireling as

Amaziah. It was a mighty indictment that he launched against the priest. It was necessary for Amos to leave Israel and go back to his native land. He had carried God's message faithfully and forcefully.

THE TEACHINGS OF AMOS

1. Amos taught very clearly that Jehovah was God of all the earth and not a mere tribal god as so many of the people seemed to think. He had absolute control in Palestine, Syria, Philistia, Ammon, Phœnicia, Edom, and Assyria. Nothing could cause him to fail in any venture he started. He was a sovereign Lord.

2. He emphasized the idea and practice of social righteousness. He demanded justice in dealing with each other. No amount of pious profession was worth anything when men were unwilling to be honest, just, clean, and righteous.

3. In his teaching, privilege involved responsibility. The Syrians, Philistines, and Phœnicians were held to a certain standard. The Israelites were measured by a much higher standard because they had been given so much greater privileges. They had been brought out of Egypt, given a new land, miraculously preserved, and prophets had come to them with divine directions. Were they not favorites of Jehovah? Surely he would not dare inflict punishment upon them! He says: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; *therefore* I will visit upon you all your iniquities." The hand of God would be heavy upon them.

4. His emphasis upon the right sort of worship was one of his finest contributions. Mere formal worship was an abomination in God's eyes. The music, the ritual, the offerings, the prayers, were utterly distasteful to a holy God when they came from cold, sinful, corrupt, unchastened hearts. Jehovah turned away in disgust from such performances. "Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream" (5: 24).

THE TIMES IN WHICH HOSEA LIVED (745-730 B.C.)

The balmiest days of Israel were enjoyed during the reign of Jeroboam II. Peace, plenty, luxury, ease, false standards, sin, and indulgence, were the ruling marks of the age. Amos did his best to warn them and to point out for them the sure symptoms of ruin and disaster. They refused to be alarmed.

When Hosea came upon the scene a few years later he found anarchy, bloodshed, stark ruin staring the nation in the face. "There is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of Jehovah in the land. There is nought but swearing and breaking faith and killing and stealing and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood" (4: 1, 2).

In the midst of such conditions Jehovah sent his message by his shrinking young prophet. The cruel Assyrian was preparing his war chariots for the journey into the West. The Kingdom of Israel was hastening toward its fall. God was the only hope. Hosea was thrust into the breach to stop the downward rush by urging them to return to God who alone could save them.

HOSEA'S PERSONAL PROBLEMS

The story opens with the picture of a young preacher and his bride building a home together. His love for Gomer was a love that transcends all pictures of love that literature has preserved for us. Robert Browning, Romeo, and Leander fail to measure up to the love of this faithful young preacher.

Children came into the home, but it became increasingly clear to the young husband that his wife did not love him. She was playing around with other lovers who promised her more of the glitter of worldly living. He soon became certain that she was false to him. Unfaithfulness is an ugly word, but it is the word to use.

When he came home to find that she had gone out with other lovers, leaving the children to him, he might

have dismissed the matter with a wave of his hand and been grateful for such a fortunate deliverance from one so base. Instead, he suffered untold agony as he poured out his heart in weeping. He really loved her, and that love was stronger than death. He suffered alone as he continued to love one who was untrue.

A NEW REALIZATION

As he sobbed his heart out in the midnight darkness, he became conscious of another voice that was sobbing. It shocked him to learn that it was God's voice and that Jehovah really was sobbing too. He had never thought of God in that way. Why should he sob? What could cause a god to suffer? Gradually it dawned upon him that God's people (his bride) had gone off in the hills of Canaan with other lovers (Baal and other false gods). He caught a vision of Jehovah deserted, lonely, forsaken, heartbroken, and sad. His great heart was torn and bleeding. His people had defiled themselves with the heathen gods. The old covenant had been broken by these faithless lovers. Instead of casting them off as vile sinners, unfit for his plan, he loved them, yearned for them, and sought earnestly to attract them to himself again. It was a picture of a God who was a true lover and whose love would never give up until the people came back.

A NEW THEOLOGY

As the young prophet thought on the matter he came to see God in a new light. As he came close to Jehovah he caught a new conception of sin. It was much more hideous and gruesome than he had ever imagined. It was the vilest, the blackest, the ugliest thing that he had ever known. He saw it as "cutting the optic nerve of the soul." Just as a certain disease may cut the optic nerve, making sight impossible, so has sin a way of deadening and killing the nerve that makes spiritual vision possible. The people who had sinned had

come to the place where it was impossible to discern spiritual things. God's chosen ones had lost the power to appreciate and understand God and his love for them.

To the prophet, Jehovah came to be a real person who was alive, near, active, and capable of strong feeling. In fact, he was the lover-God whose love was unquenchable. Disappointment, sin, corrupt living, false professions only served to make God cling with more tenacity to his loved ones.

This was a new idea for the world. The people had thought of God as a being who enjoyed unlimited power, who chose to do as he pleased, who enjoyed war and conquest, who ruled as a great monarch. Hosea learned through intimate touch with him to know him as a God of infinite tenderness who was definitely in love with all his sinning children.

A NEW CHALLENGE

Through the long hours the heart of the young preacher continued to yearn for the one he loved. He hated her sin, but he loved her. He could not forget her. His heart was still broken, and in his hours of anguish he continued to dream of the day when she would be willing to come back to his home again.

As his heart cried out for her, she was being sold into slavery. The lovers who had promised so much had already tired of her. Her life was miserable as she was kicked around from one owner to another.

One day the word of Jehovah came to Hosea asking him to go out into the city to find that sinning wife and bring her home again. She was not fit for his home. She certainly did not deserve such treatment.

It was a matter easily and quickly settled for this young lover. Instantly he made his way across the wicked city to bring her home again. When he found her in the clutches of a slave dealer he realized that she had lost the beauty and attractiveness that used to make her the pride of his eyes. The face was not beautiful,

the eyes were unattractive, the years had exacted their toll, dissipation had been unkind to her. No one wanted to buy such a wreck as she had become. The buyers looked on in disgust as the auctioneer tried in vain to get some one to buy her.

The thrilling moment came when Hosea finally won her consent to come back to his home and his heart again. He went forward to the block and deposited the money and took her away from these evil companions to his own heart again. (He very probably complied with the requirements of the Mosaic Law in leaving her in what we would call a hospital until she was well and clean and fit again.) It was love's beautiful triumph. She did not deserve it. She was not fit to come back. Love has a way of making both of these matters right.

THE WOOING NOTE IN HOSEA'S PREACHING

It was a new preacher who went out among the wandering people. He had learned of the mighty love of God that never ceased until the loved one was brought back. He promised his hearers that Jehovah still loved them and that he would not give them up until they returned. He promised them kindness, consideration, love, tenderness, and healing. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." They would be restored to the old place in God's heart and affection. God had been faithful, kind, and loving even though they had gone off after Baal and other false gods.

Hosea begged them to come back with tears and confessions. God would forgive and bless every one of them. With love, earnestness, and zeal the prophet appealed to sinning men to hearken to God and come home. He was an effective interpreter of God's great heart to men.

QUESTIONS

Describe Amos and his early life in Tekoa
Tell in detail of his preaching at Bethel
Did he use good psychology in addressing the people?
What were his charges against Israel?
How would they be punished?
What was his challenge to them?
Why did Amaziah oppose him?
State the main teachings of Amos.
Describe the times of Hosea.
How did he deal with his wife?
What new message did he gain from his tragic experience?

OUTLINE

AMOS AND HOSEA

Scripture for study—Amos 1-9; Hosea 1-14

Introduction

The balmy days of Uzziah and Jeroboam II

The Herdsman of Tekoa (760 B.C.)

From the hill country of Judah—his call to be a prophet—his preparation—his endowments

The Festival at Bethel

A great religious gathering in the Northern Kingdom—offerings in abundance

A Strange Intruder

The country preacher came upon the scene

The Charge Against the Nations

Against Damascus, Philistia, Phoenicia, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Judah

In each case the nation was guilty of breaking laws that were perfectly well known

The Sudden Turn Upon Israel

Serious charges—God was hurt

Certain Captivity Predicted

The Assyrian already on his way—sin must be punished

A Great Challenge

Call to repentance—sin must be put out—justice must take its place—restoration can come when the people repent

OLD TESTAMENT BIOGRAPHIES

posed by the Priest

The message too much for Amaziah—tries to drive Amos from the land—reply of the true prophet

the Teachings of Amos

- . Jehovah the Sovereign God of all the earth

- . Justice between men demanded

- . Privilege involves responsibility

- . God's idea of true worship

3 Times in Which Hosea Lived

Peace, plenty, luxury, idleness, oppression, bribery, immorality
Hosea's Personal Problem

Married to a woman who soon fell into sin, proved false to him, and finally deserted him to go out with other lovers

New Realization

He came to see God in a new light and to realize that God was disappointed in his chosen people—he came also to formulate a new theology

New Challenge

Jehovah called him to go after his faithless bride and bring her home—his willingness revealed something of his unending love for her

3 Wooing Note in Hosea's Preaching

It was clear to him that God loved with a love that was stronger than death, and that he would find a way to bring his loved ones home

CHAPTER VI

JUDAH'S GOLDEN AGE

INTRODUCTION

The eighth century was a great era for prophecy. Amos and Hosea preached in the Northern Kingdom, while Isaiah and Micah delivered God's messages in Jerusalem. These four men rank among the leaders in that long line of speakers for God. They represented him to the people and sought to call men back to the standards that had been set for them. Amos and Hosea did their best with the men of Israel who were rushing so rapidly toward captivity. It seems that their calls went unheeded, for there was no appreciable change in the conduct of the rebels. They were on the toboggan, and nothing could break the precipitous rush toward exile.

In 722 B.C., after a long siege, the city of Samaria was captured by the Assyrians under the leadership of Sargon II. The people were taken away to Nineveh and the Northern Kingdom came to an end. Nineteen kings had sat on the throne from 931 B.C., to 722 B.C. Jeroboam's kingdom passed from the picture never to return.

In Judah, Uzziah builded wisely and well. He left to his son, Jotham, a kingdom in the pink of condition. Ahaz followed Jotham and reigned for sixteen years. He was weak, hostile to the prophets, and uninterested in the continuance of Jehovah-worship. Isaiah tried his best to lead him to please God but to no avail. His trouble with Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria was of such a serious nature that he called in the mighty Tiglath of Assyria to help him. This was a disastrous move as Isaiah told him. Tiglath came with a great host of soldiers and practically ruined Syria and Israel. Ahaz

was called in to pay homage to his new lord. It was a disastrous day for Judah when Tiglath took control.

Hezekiah followed Ahaz on the throne of Judah, ruling for twenty-nine years. He was a better man than his father, and did his best to lead the people back to God. He found that he had inherited from his father a shattered army, a ruined peasantry, an unprotected frontier, an empty treasury, a profaned temple, a lowered morale, and a godless people who had been led away from Jehovah by Ahaz. It was a serious task that confronted the youthful Hezekiah.

A DARING YOUNG KING

It took a good deal of nerve to step upon the driver's seat and throw the entire machinery "in reverse." Hezekiah acted with a courageous enthusiasm born of God that caused him to institute sweeping changes everywhere. Vineyards, towers, pools, aqueducts, fortifications, reservoirs, and buildings were greatly improved. He won the love and admiration of his people as he sought to do everything possible for their welfare. He had as his close, intimate friend and adviser the great statesman, Isaiah. No king ever had a better counselor than this great prophet.

The doors of the Temple were soon opened. Priests, Levites, workmen, and architects were called back to work again. Ahaz had made it practically impossible for the worship of Jehovah to be carried on. It was a big task to clear away the "filthiness" of the house. The sacred vessels were found, cleansed, sanctified, and brought back to their places.

When the house was fit for worship again, they had a joyful day of dedication and thanksgiving. Offerings were brought, hearts rejoiced, songs were sung, and the people were happy in the worship of Jehovah. Hezekiah, who led in the service, seemed to be happier than any one in the entire group.

Following the great service, Hezekiah led his people in the observance of the Passover. The people of Judah

and also the people of the Northern Kingdom were invited to this celebration. Many of the people laughed and mocked when the messengers came to them with the royal invitation, but a goodly number answered the call and came to the solemn meeting.

When the people came together they became conscious of a great number of idols, altars, images, and idol furniture that did not fit into the picture. Led by Hezekiah, they fell upon these evidences of idolatry and dumped the broken fragments into the field. Even the great altar, erected by Ahaz after his trip to meet Tiglath at Damascus, was demolished and carried out by the zealous followers of Hezekiah.

It was a happy group that came back to the solemn assembly for the sacred observance. They were singing, shouting, and worshiping God as they did his will. We may be sure that Isaiah and Micah were responsible for a great deal of this zeal for Jehovah. They must have been the moving force behind Hezekiah to stir up so much enthusiasm for Jehovah.

When Hezekiah came face to face with Sennacherib, in 701 B.C., his faith was sorely tested. The great warrior had run over all of Palestine, had defeated Egypt, and was at that moment ready to attack and destroy Jerusalem. It would be foolish to try to withstand such an invader. His army was invincible. Jerusalem was doomed.

It was in this trying hour that Hezekiah showed a daring faith that had not been equaled by any king before him. He was so convinced that Jehovah was going to defend his city that he boldly defied the great Assyrian army. It looked like suicide, but it was the way to victory. God delivered his city and his kingdom. Sennacherib suffered the most serious defeat of his career when he found 185,000 dead on the field as a result of Jehovah's hand. He went back to Nineveh to spend the rest of his life. He did not come against Jerusalem again.

We must pause a moment to give the greater credit to that mighty statesman, Isaiah, who spoke with such conviction and effectiveness that Hezekiah and his associates were compelled to believe. He was the greatest man alive in his day. Jehovah honored him and his city by predicting the certain overthrow of the proud Assyrian who should be led back to his land with a hook in his nose. God gave the victory.

THE YOUNG DEMOCRAT

Micah was called of God to preach his Word to the sinning people during the days of Jotham. His ministry was in the land of Judah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Isaiah was his great contemporary. God raised up Micah to champion the cause of the poor and oppressed. He was primarily concerned with social justice and religious duty. The nobles were getting richer by making the poor people poorer. Courts were corrupt and the poor could not hope for justice.

Micah must have taken an active part in the reformation under Hezekiah. His strong preaching prepared the way for the king's reform measures. He was rough, crude, pointed, and vigorous in his preaching. He was greatly concerned for the welfare of his poor, defenseless neighbors. His righteous indignation blazed forth in stinging words of reproof and ringing challenges to repent. He was as fearless as he was direct.

DOOM PROMISED

Graphically he pictured the coming of an invader who would carry the people away into exile. God was bringing this army to cause trouble and correction. Captivity was a definite step in God's program for his chosen people.

Micah was certain that he could explain the call to go into exile. It was not because of an arbitrary ruling of a heartless God, but because of specific sins of the people of Judah. They had made it necessary.

With fierceness he attacked the "land-grabber" who lay awake at night making plans to catch the poor victims on the morrow. Early in the morning he made his way to evict the poor owner of the land. He then claimed it as his own while the poor man was left without a home.

The greedy creditor who plucked the cloak from the back of the poor man and who drove helpless women and children from their homes was the target for one of his strongest sermons.

The judges, governors, and rulers were attacked because of their love of bribes and because they were unwilling to render a decision except as it would provide spoil for them. In Micah 3: 2, 3, he accused these men of being cannibals, killing, cooking, and eating his people.

Prophets and priests were as false as any one else. The preachers delivered soft messages to please the people who paid the salary.

In fact, all the people were false, and Micah could find no one in whom he could confide. The religious leaders were opposed to him, and the rulers certainly did not appreciate his stinging words. He was battling bravely and hopelessly to make men turn and come back to God.

THE PROGRAM OF GOD

Micah was permitted to see God's program for his chosen people. It had the following steps in it: anguish, captivity, exile, punishment, years of purging, a glorious return, and the salvation of the world through the redeemed remnant.

He was certain of the judgment that was to come to people who deserved it. He was just as certain that beyond the dark clouds a new day of restoration would bring an opportunity for the evangelization of the world. The city must fall, the people must suffer in order that the new day of rejoicing might be made possible. The people had gone so far in sin that reformation was out of the question until captivity brought it about.

Taking the long look, the prophet was able to look far beyond the smoking ruins of the city and the piteous cries of the exiles. He saw the mighty hand of God working out his plan and purpose.

Jerusalem was to fall, but the beautiful little city of Bethlehem was to continue through the centuries until one day One would come to bring peace, healing, salvation, and joy to his people. Micah saw the Messiah coming, not from the great city, but from the remote place where the poor peasant farmers and shepherds lived. It was Micah who gave the directions that guided the Wise Men when they came to find the Child. Seven centuries meant nothing to the Spirit who could reveal to Micah the birthplace of the Saviour.

Micah also gave to the world a picture of the effects of that Messiah's reign when universal peace would come. It will be a glorious day when men are willing to abdicate the throne to the Prince of Peace who has a right to reign.

JEHOVAH'S LAWSUIT

In chapters six and seven, Micah gave a statement of essential religion. He was talking to men who thought of God as an unlimited despot whose wrathful spirit and thirst for blood must be satisfied with costly gifts and bloody sacrifices. Micah brought to them in one brief statement a summary of the messages of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. Each of these prophets had emphasized an essential feature of true religion. The keynote of Amos' teaching was *justice*. Hosea struck the richer, deeper note of *love*. Isaiah called for a *reverent walk* in fellowship with the majestic Sovereign who was yearning for fellowship.

This magnificent statement was truly a foregleam of the message of Jesus who came to make this vital requirement of essential religion clear to men and to constrain his followers to present themselves according to the requirements in the Sermon on the Mount.

THE STATESMAN PROPHET

The greatest man alive in that eighth century was Isaiah, the prophet of God. He began his ministry about 740 B.C., and was still preaching at the close of the century. For forty years he served God in his native city, Jerusalem. Under Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah he preached the Word of Jehovah. As a statesman and adviser of kings he has had few, if any, equals. As a faithful, courageous, effective interpreter of God's Word he stands at the top. His was a marvelous work.

The Divine Call—His call came in the year that king Uzziah died (740 B.C.). It was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. As a young man he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. During all the years of his life he was never able to get away from that experience. It was to him the most significant moment of his life, just as Paul always looked back to the experience on the Damascus road as the turning point in his life.

In that call he saw Jehovah, saw himself as a sinner, saw the needy world crying out for a guide and Redeemer, and willingly volunteered to go as an humble preacher for his God. The commission was a startling one and one too heavy for human shoulders to carry. Jehovah would uphold and bless him and make his message effective.

Under Ahaz—From that moment he was under the divine direction and must do God's will. During the days of Jotham he was getting his bearing and beginning his ministry. When Ahaz came to the throne, Isaiah had a difficult task. The king was not at all interested in Jehovah. He could not be bothered by anything like religion. He became openly hostile to any one who sought to promulgate the teachings of Jehovah.

When Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel came against Judah, it caused a panic in the small brain of Ahaz. He was incapable of a great faith in the God who had done so many things for his people. He probably despised Isaiah and Micah. He knew that his army was weak,

his water supply inadequate and defeat inevitable. What could a mere man do under such circumstances? Ahaz proceeded to tremble and to call on Tiglath of Assyria to come to his rescue.

Isaiah had a faith in God that was big enough to cause him to advise Ahaz to lean heavily on God and fear no man. He was well aware of the dire consequences of an alliance with the cruel Assyrians. His advice to the godless young king was ignored. The fatal step was taken, and Isaiah left to go on with his preaching to a people who refused to listen to him just as their king had done. They were rapidly following a wicked king away from God.

Concerning Egypt—When the Assyrian yoke became heavy upon their shoulders, the politicians advised turning away from Assyria and calling upon Egypt to help them. The young Hezekiah, who hated to see his people suffer under the Assyrians, seems to have agreed with the Egyptian party in their proposal. Isaiah came into the breach at once with his powerful challenge to trust God and remain loyal to the covenant already made. He told them of the strength of Sennacherib's army that would soon be hurled into the West and of the utter futility of trusting on Egypt to save them. It would be a suicidal policy of bad politics and bad religion. If they could only trust God, they might rest securely in his own gracious hands.

The Crisis in 701—When Sennacherib finally came against the rebellious nations in Palestine, he swept all before him as he marched triumphantly on through the land. Finally, Jerusalem was the only city in the land that was left. Messengers came to demand the surrender of the city, since nothing could prevent its capture and destruction. It was Isaiah the statesman who stood in the breach and deliberately assured Hezekiah and the people that Jehovah would save his city, and that no harm would come to any one in that secure spot.

How could he do it? Nothing could possibly stop the proud conqueror. All the armies combined could be brushed aside as so many flies. Yet Isaiah stood forth as God's spokesman to guarantee safety. That faith in God was the secret of it all. He had God's word for it and he knew that no harm could come to the city. His faith was vindicated when 185,000 soldiers were left dead upon the ground and the enemy was utterly routed without one arrow falling in the city. God's great prophet had more wisdom than all the other statesmen.

PICTURES OF THE MESSIAH

As great as Isaiah was in the nation to counsel, advise, and encourage, he was even greater as an interpreter of God's will for the future. He preached great messages and controlled the policies of state, but he was able as a prophet of God to pull aside the screen and show us glimpses of the coming Messiah.

In chapters two, four, seven, nine, eleven, sixteen, thirty-two, forty-two, forty-nine, fifty, fifty-two, fifty-three, and sixty-one, he has given us some of these pictures. Even though he wrote seven hundred years before the coming of the Christ, he was able to put down for us some words and descriptions that only one who was inspired could reveal. The marvel of predictive prophecy is too great for us except as we see the God back of the human prophet. When we see him we need not doubt anything that has been put down for us.

In the early chapters he revealed the Messiah as *Immanuel*—"God with us"—and then as "*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*." In chapter eleven that same Person is to be a king from the stock of Jesse. He is to be divinely equipped and will rule and judge with supernatural skill while peace will come as one of the results of his reign.

When we come to the great Book of Comfort (chapters 40 to 66) we face the other great pictures of the Anointed of God. The four Servant Poems (42, 49, 50,

and 52: 13 to 53: 12) are classics that command our best thinking. In them the prophet has pictured the *Servant's* call, his gentleness, his perseverance, his two-fold mission to Jew and Gentile, his preparation, his patience and endurance, and his exaltation following his humiliation and suffering.

In the great fifty-third chapter that Suffering One takes the sins of others and voluntarily suffers that the debt may be paid. He gladly takes the place of the guilty one and dies in his stead. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Though innocent as a lamb he died without resistance as a part of the infinite plan of God. In his death he was among the wicked ones, and his grave was with the rich. How could this prophet speak such words and paint such pictures? He was under the control of the Spirit who revealed to him the pictures.

Isaiah was the greatest of the long line of prophets who heard God's call and came to the people with the divine message. His influence can never be fully measured. God called him, prepared him, inspired him, and used him to do his will.

QUESTIONS

Name the four great prophets of the eighth century.

Give some of the leading events in the career of Hezekiah.

Describe his crisis in 701 B.C.

What kind of man was Micah?

What was God's program for Judah as stated by Micah?

Quote Micah 6: 8.

Describe in detail the call of Isaiah (Chapter 6).

How did Isaiah show himself a great statesman?

What was his advice concerning Egypt?

Name the principal Messianic passages in Isaiah.

What are Isaiah's favorite names for the Messiah?

OUTLINE

JUDAH'S GOLDEN AGE

Scripture for study—2 Kings 15-20; 2 Chron. 26-32; Micah 1-7;
Isaiah 1-66

Introduction

Isaiah, Micah, Amos, and Hosea preaching during the eighth century—fall of Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C.—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the kings in Judah

Hezekiah, the Daring Young King

Sweeping changes and reforms everywhere—the Temple repaired and opened for worship—Passover observed—destruction of idols and altars—faith sorely tested when Sennacherib came against Jerusalem—Isaiah's contribution

Micah, the Young Democrat

Contemporary of Isaiah—active in reforms of Hezekiah—graphic picture of doom—denunciation of every sin

God's Program for Judah

Judgment, exile, chastening, restoration, and the evangelization of the nations through Israel's efforts

Jehovah's Lawsuit

The statement of essential religion—summary of the messages of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah

Isaiah, the Statesman

His call in 740 B.C. to become a prophet—the symbolic message that accompanied the call—the responsibility that was upon his soldiers—his ministry under Ahaz—the crisis when Pekah and Rezin came—his prophecies concerning Egypt—the serious crisis brought on by the invasion of Sennacherib

Pictures of the Messiah

Chapters 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 16, 32, 42, 49, 50, 52: 13 to 53: 12—
"Immanuel," "Wonderful Counselor," "Mighty God," "Everlasting Father," "Prince of Peace," the "Servant," the "Suffering Servant"

CHAPTER VII

MANASSEH, JOSIAH, AND JEREMIAH

A SIGNIFICANT TRANSITION

It was a sad day for Jerusalem when Isaiah, Hezekiah, and Micah passed off the scene of action. They were the three men who for a quarter of a century had kept the people in line for the worship of Jehovah. Even with them the country had been made to suffer severely under the invasion of Sennacherib. It seems that the miraculous deliverance from the threatened disaster would have made it impossible for the people to turn away from Jehovah.

THE WICKED MANASSEH

Hezekiah's twelve-year-old son succeeded to the throne of Judah in 698 B.C. He was the worst of all the long line of kings, and remained on the throne longer than any of them. The heathen party took immediate control. Tradition tells us that Isaiah was sawn asunder by the order of Manasseh. It was a tragic period for the followers of Jehovah.

All known heathen cults and customs were introduced, and the impure rites were set up as the official order. Much innocent blood was shed while the people hid themselves from the cruel monarch. That long reign of fifty-five years practically sealed the doom of the land. Even good Josiah and the great prophet Jeremiah could not avert the judgment that must come. They could not hope to wean the people away from the sinful practices into which they had been led. It would take a miracle to extricate the people from the depths. After that wild half century, captivity was inevitable.

Manasseh continued his loyalty to Assyria, paying the heavy tribute regularly. It was a heavy load for his people to carry, but it was the only way to continue as a nation.

THE GOOD KING JOSIAH

At the age of eight, Josiah came to the throne of Judah. With such a background it seemed impossible to expect a good reign, but the boy became the best ruler after Hezekiah. His father, Amon, and his grandfather, Manasseh, were as bad as the worst. For over fifty years the nation had been steeped in sin and heathen-worship. How could a mere boy amount to anything?

Evidently Josiah had some good advisers who loved Jehovah and were courageous enough to break away from the established order of things and help lead the people back to God. The priest, Hilkiah, must have been the good influence in the life of this boy who was still too young for the junior department.

As a boy he began seeking the Lord and learning of him as the Guide of his way. It was not long until he was leading a group in the destruction of idols, heathen altars, images, and other furniture of false worship.

Later in his reign he set about repairing the Temple. It evidently needed a great deal of work to make it presentable, as it had suffered seriously during the years of Manasseh and Amon. Shaphan and Hilkiah were in active charge of the work. After a great deal of rubbish had been removed, the priest found an ancient copy of the Torah of Moses. Shaphan read it and took it to the king. Each of the three men was alarmed and excited over the remarkable find. They had never seen such a book before. They recognized it at once as being the Book of the Law given by Moses.

The king was shocked because of the realization of the divine wrath upon him and upon his people. The book revealed enough to cause him to tear his clothing into shreds and prostrate himself upon the ground. He could

not be certain of any way of escape, for God's threats were severe.

He sent the book with a special delegation to the prophetess Huldah for her word concerning it. She informed them that the threats would all be fulfilled and that the people must suffer as a result of their sins. Because of the goodness of Josiah the nation would be spared during his days. Terrible days were coming for the land. Defeat, exile, tragedy, suffering, and punishment were near.

The people were called together from all parts of the realm to hear the reading of the Book of the Covenant. All the laws, promises, and threats that the book contained were read to the people. While still deeply affected by the message, they were called upon to ratify the Mosaic Law as the law of the land. They took a solemn oath to that effect.

Immediately they were led forth to destroy every idolatrous altar and symbol that existed in the city and its environs. They moved under the direct orders of Jehovah to break down and demolish every vestige of heathen-worship. They went as far afield as Bethel and the Land of Israel. Josiah willingly made a covenant with Jehovah "to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book." It was great to see the young king and his people stand together in a solemn pledge to carry out all of the requirements of the old covenant. It was a sweeping reform that extended throughout the entire length of the land and carried out every vestige of heathenism.

He was probably ably assisted by Zephaniah and Jeremiah. They became great prophets who were closely associated with Josiah and we may be reasonably certain of their help in this crisis. Zephaniah was a powerful preacher of the word of the Lord.

In 612 B.C., Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell before the combined attacks of Medes, Babylonians, and Scyth-

ians. The remnant of the inhabitants fled to Haran for a last stand. Pharaoh-nechoh of Egypt started across the land to help his friend, the king of Assyria. At Megiddo, he was attacked by Josiah. Just why Josiah was foolish enough to make such a move we can never know. It was suicide. In the battle the good king Josiah was mortally wounded. It was a tragic day for Judah. The sun set on the Kingdom of Judah when Josiah died. It was only a few steps to the end.

Jehoahaz, his son, was placed on the throne by the people who hoped to continue the same fine policies, but he lasted only three months for Pharaoh-necho came back and put Jehoiakim in his place to do the bidding of Egypt.

THE END OF THE KINGDOM

After the death of Josiah, the end came rapidly. The people followed Jehoiakim back into the worst sins, and the prophets of Jehovah had a hard time. Jeremiah suffered under him. Nebuchadnezzar, the new king of Babylon, soon put an end to the Assyrian and Egyptian power. It was easy for him to come against Jerusalem in 605 B.C., and in 598 B.C., taking the treasures and the best of the young men of the city. Daniel was among the captives in 605, and Ezekiel was carried away in 598.

The city was left with Zedekiah acting as king under Babylonian control. In 587, he revolted again, depending on Egypt for assistance. When Nebuchadnezzar came with his army he finished his task completely. The walls were broken down, the houses were burned, the Temple was completely demolished, many were killed and the others taken away in chains to Babylon.

It was a tragic day for the city of David and for the glorious Temple of God. The fate predicted by the prophets had come upon it. In Isaiah's day the city was miraculously spared because God had something further in store for it. It fell in Jeremiah's day because the people had sinned away every right they had to divine protection.

Zedekiah escaped but was captured in the valley. Brought before the king, he watched the execution of his sons, and then had his own eyes burned out before the long journey to Babylon began.

The Kingdom of Judah, after three hundred and forty-four years of existence, was finally dead. During these years, nineteen kings had sat on the throne. Each of them was a direct descendant of David. Zedekiah was the last of the line. From that moment there would be no Kingdom of Judah. After seventy years some of the survivors would come back, but not to establish a kingdom.

THE CALL OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah was born in Anathoth, a small village just outside Jerusalem. The son of a priestly family, he was definitely interested in the Temple and its services. Josiah was trying to bring the people back to the worship of Jehovah.

His call to prophetic service came in 626 B.C., while he was still a boy. He shrank from the task which the Lord laid upon him because he recognized his own limitations and also saw what tremendous odds he would have to face in Jerusalem. It was a burden calculated to cause a strong man to stagger. How could a mere lad do it?

Jehovah did not lose patience with the youngster, but replied with tenderness, sympathy, and promise. The divine presence was assured for every difficult task. His weakness would only add to his effectiveness because it would allow Jehovah to carry out his plans without interference. He said to Jeremiah: "I knew thee . . . I formed thee . . . I sanctified thee . . . I have appointed thee . . . I am with thee." The God who knew all about his weakness had appointed him to be his personal representative to the people.

HIS EARLY MINISTRY

During the days of Josiah, this young prophet developed into a mighty preacher. Jerusalem was the scene

of his labors. Zephaniah and his aunt Huldah were his associates in the ministry. They all had a part in the reform movement of the king and, together, they were able to turn the tide of religious loyalty back to Jehovah. The finding of the Law and its meaningful words must have made a profound impression on Jeremiah.

When Josiah was mortally wounded at Megiddo it practically broke the prophet's heart. His best friend was gone. It would not be safe for him to preach again in the land, for every official would oppose him to the end of the kingdom.

UNDER JEHOIAKIM

Jeremiah was so courageous and fearless in his preaching that the prophets and priests and people were soon clamoring for his head. Jehoiakim was his bitter enemy, too. To add to his misery, he soon became conscious of the appalling fact that Judah's idolatry was incurable. His prayers for his people could not be answered. They had sinned, and punishment alone could be their portion.

He was not allowed the comfort and solace of a wife to help him in his work. Forbidden to marry, he had to carry on alone in the midst of his distressing conditions. His own people of Anathoth conspired against him. It seemed to the sensitive soul that every one was against him. It served to drive him back to his God from whom he derived his strength.

His roll was taken, read, cut into shreds, and burned in the fire by an infuriated king who opposed him at every turn. Under God's direction, he set to work to write it again.

Arrested, beaten, and put in the stocks by the priest, he became deeply discouraged and sought to quit preaching. He tells us that such a course was impossible, for there was a fire shut up in his bones that caused him to go on preaching at whatever cost. The poor fellow was carrying a load too heavy for mortal man. He was able to go on only as Jehovah came to his rescue and helped him.

When Nebuchadnezzar, the great Babylonian conqueror, appeared in 605 B.C., Jeremiah began to preach the unpopular doctrine of submission. He predicted the complete overthrow of the city and seventy years of exile. His countrymen called him a traitor for such talk. In the face of hatred and fierce opposition, he continued to preach that message from God. As the divine spokesman, he was given insight into the plan of God for his people and was able to interpret coming events.

UNDER ZEDEKIAH

Jeremiah breathed easier when Jehoiakim passed away, but did not get much relief from his successor or from Zedekiah, the last king. The people were bitter in their opposition, and it was very difficult for Zedekiah to show any mercy toward the preacher even if he had been disposed to do it.

The false prophets contended that no harm could come to the city and that the captives taken away in 605 and 598 would soon be on their way home again. It was necessary for the true prophet to continue his unpopular announcement of the fall of the city and a long exile.

When Nebuchadnezzar's army encamped against the city, Jeremiah was in an embarrassing position. Since he was in direct communication with God, he knew just what was certain to happen. Without hesitation, he urged Zedekiah and his group to submit to the invader and save the city. This advice branded him as a traitor, and he became a dangerous man to have in the midst of discouraged soldiers. In order that he might not do any further damage, they arrested him and threw him into a pit to die.

The king needed him to give counsel concerning the future of his city, and so he was taken to a clean room in the king's own house where he was kept a prisoner.

In desperation, the people came to the king demanding the life of the old prophet. Zedekiah was too weak to assert his own rights, and so Jeremiah was turned over to

the fury of the mob. Instead of murdering him outright, they threw him into another dungeon where death would be certain. They had murder in their hearts.

Jeremiah had one good friend at court who gained permission to save the preacher from his precarious position. The Ethiopian used thirty men to draw Jeremiah from his muddy grave. He was restored to his place in the house of the king where he remained until the capture of the city.

The city finally could stand the siege no longer. There was no food, and the water supply was about exhausted. Zedekiah and his family group escaped under the wall as the enemy made their entrance from the front. There followed a scene of carnage, destruction, and disaster. Houses and palaces were burned. The Temple was completely destroyed. The sacred vessels were taken away with the other treasures. The walls were knocked down, and the people who were not slaughtered were made prisoners to start the long journey to Babylon.

A PRIVILEGED CHARACTER

Evidently Nebuzaradan, the commanding officer, had heard of the stand that Jeremiah had taken throughout the siege. At any rate, orders were given that the prophet was to be spared and brought to headquarters as a special prisoner. He was allowed to choose between going to Babylon with the captives or remaining in Jerusalem to encourage and strengthen the group left to carry on under Gedaliah, the newly-appointed governor of Palestine. He chose to remain in his old city as Jehovah's representative among the bad group left to inhabit the land. He thus escaped the humiliation and hardships of an enforced march to Babylon.

His work with the new governor was far from easy. The neighboring people were not anxious to see a strong band of people in the vicinity of Jerusalem. They hired an assassin to get rid of Gedaliah so that they could have control of the land. Immediately there was a panic

among the people. They were afraid to remain in Jerusalem, for the Babylonian might punish them severely for upsetting the established government. In desperation, they decided to go to Egypt. They took the helpless old prophet with them into the land he hated so much. He had escaped one exile only to be led into another one.

In Egypt, God still used the old preacher to proclaim his message to the Jews who assembled about him. He announced to them that Nebuchadnezzar from whom they had fled would soon come into Egypt to capture the land and set up his throne on the ruins of an Egyptian civilization. This prophecy was quickly fulfilled.

The Jews in Egypt were guilty of several forms of idolatry. Jeremiah denounced the burning of incense to the queen of heaven. They were so completely given over to idolatrous worship that his preaching was fruitless. He must have died of a broken heart without ever going back to the land he loved so dearly. One Jewish tradition claims that he was stoned to death by his own people who were tired of his attacks upon them. He gave them the best that he could for nearly half a century. They refused to hearken to him.

AN ESTIMATE OF JEREMIAH

How shall we judge such a character? For half a century he preached for God among people who despised him, feared him, hated him, persecuted him, and refused to listen to his words. They called him a traitor. God forbade his praying for the people whom he loved better than his life. He was forced constantly to announce exile for the people and to fight on without let-up when he was assured that victory was impossible. He hated idolatry, and gave his life fighting manfully against it. Was his life worth anything to the kingdom? How did he help matters by his ceaseless preaching? Was his life a failure?

Jeremiah preached to people who were going into exile; and those people opened their eyes one day to realize

that the preacher was right, that God was able to carry out his promises and threats. God had claimed Nebuchadnezzar as his servant. They were able to believe the words of Jeremiah concerning him after events came out as they did.

Jeremiah preached two definite doctrines that helped prepare the way for the new day when God would be more real and personal. He emphasized the doctrine of individual responsibility and that of the new covenant. The way was being prepared for the New Testament doctrine of spirituality and individualism. Jeremiah was prepared for such a message because of his intimate touch with God. During those lonely years when practically everybody was hostile to him and the future looked dark, the preacher was forced to lean heavily upon his God. That God became a real friend who upheld him and sustained him through the darkest hours.

He was one of God's greatest representatives who gave himself unsparingly to do his will in all things.

QUESTIONS

What did Manasseh do to corrupt Judah?

Can you explain Josiah's course of action in changing so completely from the policies of his fathers?

Describe the finding of the Law and its effects upon the people.

Describe the reforms that followed.

Give the main facts in the fall of Jerusalem.

Picture the call of the youthful Jeremiah.

What hardships did Jeremiah have to endure?

Describe his treatment under Zedekiah.

Why should Nebuzaradan give Jeremiah special consideration at the capture of Jerusalem?

Why was it necessary for him to go to Egypt?

OUTLINE

Scripture for study—2 Kings 21-25; 2 Chron. 33-36; Jeremiah 1-52

MANASSEH, JOSIAH, AND JEREMIAH

A Significant Transition

The Wicked Manasseh (reign of 55 years)

Begins his reign as a boy of twelve—wickedness and heathenism encouraged—doom of Judah sealed

The Good King Josiah (reign of 31 years)

Background of sin and disaster—good advisers—began seeking the Lord—the Temple repaired—the Book of the Law found—Huldah consulted—prayer and the covenant renewed—idols destroyed—slain in battle at Megiddo

The End of the Kingdom

Jehoiakim's wicked reign—Jeremiah's efforts fail—Nebuchadnezzar comes in 605 B.C. and 598 B.C.—Jerusalem destroyed 587 B.C.—people carried into captivity

The Call of Jeremiah (626 B.C.)

Young priest from Anathoth—hand of God upon him—objections offered—God's challenges and promises

His Early Ministry

Under the friendly Josiah—helping in the early reforms—laments death of Josiah

Troublous Days Under Jehoiakim

Opposed by the king—hated by the people—forbidden to marry—his book destroyed—arrested, beaten, and imprisoned

Under Zedekiah

Opposed by the false prophets and the priests—preached submission to the Chaldeans—arrested and confined—released by a friend—city besieged and destroyed

Jeremiah, a Privileged Character

Given special consideration by Nebuzaradan—chose to remain in Jerusalem with Gedaliah, the new governor—taken to Egypt

An Estimate of Jeremiah

Responsive, talented, obedient, courageous, lonely—God's man who continued through nearly half a century as a faithful prophet

CHAPTER VIII

EZEKIEL AND DANIEL

THE EXILES IN BABYLONIA

The great host of Jewish captives taken away by the order of Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C., took up their residence by the waters of Babylon. They were not scattered among other peoples as the prisoners from the ten tribes seem to have been, but were allowed to remain in a compact group so that they could keep up their old family ties and enjoy a measure of autonomy.

During the first few years they were deluded with the hope of a speedy return to the old home. They could not believe that the city of Jerusalem would fall. The news of the fatal catastrophe was a blow too heavy for even their stout hearts. When they recovered from the first shock, they settled down to make themselves at home and wait for the long days to drag by. They were in colonies in one of the most fertile plains of the world with plenty of water for irrigation.

There was plenty of time for reflection and meditation. They thought back to the messages of the prophets and the threats that had been unheeded. They realized now that their God was speaking through these men his own unchanging word concerning his people. They were able to take to heart the stern messages of these men of God.

THE CALL TO PREACH

Ezekiel was taken to Babylon in 598 B.C. along with a great host of the best residents of Jerusalem. He was a member of the family of Zadok and in the regular order of the priesthood. His stay in Babylonia must

have been a very unhappy one as he watched daily for news of a return. His good friend, Jeremiah, was preaching in Jerusalem. His king, Jehoiachin, was in prison near him. Zedekiah was on the tottering throne at Jerusalem. Daniel was taking his place as a wise officer in the affairs of Babylon. Hosts of his friends were sitting by the Great Canal ("River Chebar") weeping, wailing, and lamenting. It was a dark hour for the energetic, ambitious, patriotic, young priest.

In this tragic situation the hand of the Lord came upon Ezekiel with such force that it shocked him. Gradually he became conscious of the fact that he was being called to preach for his God. It was the divine challenge to service.

In a vision he saw Jehovah, and the sight of the divine Being caused him to fall upon his face. Then he heard the voice from the Throne calling him to become a prophet to the exiles. He knew that he was being singled out to do a specific work for God. He felt the power of God opening his eyes and his heart. The voice charged him to be brave, submissive, and obedient in the full performance of the arduous task.

In the heat of the never-to-be-forgotten experience, he was offered the roll of the book and commanded to eat it. It was a sweet morsel for him as he obediently accepted the challenge to be God's spokesman to deliver faithfully every word received from God for the people. He was made to understand that he should be made strong to endure the hardest toil for his Master. Ezekiel described himself as being gripped by the Almighty with such power that he could never forget the strange feeling. God's hand was truly upon him.

Ezekiel tells us that, under the spell of that experience, he went forth to preach to the captives by the river. Instead of preaching to them immediately, he sat down for seven days side by side with the weeping exiles. In that way he was enabled to know the burdens, the sorrows, the doubts, the fears, the hopes, and aims of

the people to whom he was to minister. He was better able to preach after those days of preparation. If we could only see the point of view of the other fellow, we could do a great deal more in helping him in his difficulty. That principle in operation would help in every phase of life. It was the principle which Jesus put into operation.

Ezekiel was conscious of the fearful responsibility that rested upon him as Jehovah's representative to man. He was made to believe that he was being held responsible for the faithful deliverance of the message to every person who could be reached with it. We do not wonder that he was exceptionally effective as a prophet.

HIS EARLY MINISTRY

For six years he preached to people who were expecting Jerusalem to continue to stand. They were counting on returning to the old home to enjoy the blessings of the Temple worship again. They could not believe that the sacred sanctuary could be destroyed. Jeremiah was trying to convince the people in Jerusalem that the city must be captured, and Ezekiel was seeking to do the same thing for the exiles. False hopes had to be dealt with in each instance.

In a vision, Ezekiel was carried to Jerusalem for an inspection tour of that wicked city. He was convinced that the amount of wickedness found there demanded punishment. He saw that Jehovah was determined to blot out the sins of the land and take his people away into a place of purging. It was necessary for him to be stern and uncompromising in his messages of doom. The people must know God's will and recognize his hand in the events that were to be seen. His work was not popular, but it would bear fruit.

In order that he might teach his people the proper way to accept the inevitable news of the fall of Jerusalem, the prophet was informed that on the morrow his wife would die. He was commanded to face that grief with dry eyes and without lamentation. With a strange

display of courage, the prophet met the emergency and explained to his people the coming catastrophe that they were to face.

Ezekiel had a more difficult task in convincing the people that the calamity was due to their sins. Such sins had made suffering necessary. He wanted them to begin reaping the benefit to be derived from the Exile. They must be willing to bow to the will of God, accept his correction, and look forward to the future when the seventy years would end and the arm of God would be thrust forth to lead his own people back home.

HIS LATER MINISTRY

After the fall of Jerusalem, in 587 B.C., he had a much larger congregation, and the tone of his message was different. He was now the faithful pastor of his flock and sought to bring them messages of hope, cheer, and encouragement. It was his privilege to interpret the acts of God to a bewildered and discouraged group. They must be led to see that the Exile was merely an interruption in the career of the nation and not a disruption of God's plans.

He would not compromise with sin, but he always held out hope for the sinner. He pictured each man as having the power to be righteous or wicked irrespective of hereditary predisposition. In each case the individual was the master of his own destiny and wholly responsible for his acts. Each man was free and also responsible. Man was not bound by any conduct of his ancestors or by his own past conduct. Heredity and habit were both powerless, if the individual chose to exercise his own will. It was a new note and a hopeful one for the exiles.

He represented God as a loving One standing ready for any repentant child to come home. He did not rejoice in the death of any one, but yearned for the wayward child to come back to God.

Ezekiel was primarily interested in the full restoration of the Jewish nation. He thought of the Exile as God's

instrument of chastening. His people were really in the grave, but the dry bones would live and the nation would come forth from the grave. When the elders suggested the building of a temple on Babylonian soil he opposed it with all his might. He did not want anything to hinder the complete restoration of the nation to the old land. "In the holy mountain, that is Zion, there alone shall the temple be built."

He foresaw the collection and return of the captives from all the lands and the new settlement upon the mountain at Jerusalem. With painstaking detail he laid out the plan of the new building as well as the lines of the future policy of the nation. He made it clear that the one condition of the future glory was national penitence, a new heart, and a new spirit. God would provide the new heart and spirit.

One of the most hopeful pictures of the entire Old Testament was presented by Ezekiel in chapter forty-seven. The life-giving stream, flowing from the altar in the Temple, increases in volume as it flows eastward, transforming the Way of Fire and the Dead Sea into a picture of life, health, and prosperity. Wherever the water goes, life comes immediately. Even the death of the Dead Sea area is driven away.

THE YOUNG STUDENT PRINCE

When Nebuchadnezzar returned from Jerusalem in 605 B.C., he brought back some of the finest young students of the land. Among these was the young prince Daniel. It was a serious blow to the boy to be dragged away from his people and his native city to become a prisoner in the foreign capital. It was about eighteen years before the final destruction of Jerusalem when the rest of the people were taken to Babylon.

We are told concerning the young captives that they were "of the seed royal and of the nobles, youths in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding

science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace." Daniel and his friends certainly came to the court of Nebuchadnezzar highly recommended. They were select youngsters who gave promise of fine future development. The king was happy to honor them with a great opportunity.

It was easy for Daniel and his friends to pass the entrance examination that admitted them into the select group of those who were being trained for Babylon's "wise men." They were qualified to take their places among the best of the realm. In this school they were given the finest advantages that were available for the best education. They were signally honored.

MEETING TEMPTATION

In the new life at the court, Daniel was immediately faced with some real temptations. It would be easy to conform to the practices and customs of a pagan court. Jerusalem and Jehovah could well be forgotten. A new life could begin now with all the old restraints gone. He wanted to be popular with the king, the other students, and with his teachers. He was under strict discipline, and was to obey all orders of the king. It certainly seemed that it was time to fall in line with the ways of Babylon and conform his walk to the accepted formula of the new home. The good food must have appealed to the growing boy. In short, the temptation to do as all the others about him was probably very strong. The challenge to "*dare to be different*" was not such an attractive one under the existing circumstances.

A DARING RESOLVE

"He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat." Daniel was one young student who refused to allow himself to be driven into something that would injure him even though all the others were willing to go that way. We admire one who has the nerve to stand up for his con-

victions and refuse to be defiled. He had been building character for years. In this testing time he proved that he was made of the right material.

He knew that the food and the drink were not according to the Law of Moses, and that they would render him less efficient. He knew that he would be going contrary to God's will for his life were he to break over and submit to the new commands. He wanted to be physically strong, mentally alert, and spiritually clean. His purpose saved him untold agony, sure defeat, and endless obscurity. Because he was willing to pay the price, his name has come down to us clear, shining, illustrious, and will continue to be revered to the end of time.

AN HONOR-GRADUATE

When the officer agreed to the proposed test suggested by Daniel, the victory was really won. At the end of the time set for the trial, it was easy to see that Daniel and his friends were doing better than the other students. God was helping his children even though they were in a strange land.

When graduation day came, these four students who had refused "to defile themselves" stood so far ahead of the other members of the class that there was no question of their superiority. Daniel took his place easily as the "valedictorian." How did he do it? How could a mere change of diet work such a miracle? We find the answer in Daniel 1: 17. "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." Jehovah was willing to honor one who was willing to honor him. He was the best in his group because God chose to give him wisdom, insight, understanding, and knowledge. God chose to honor him because he was strong enough to put out the things that displeased God and to put in the things that pleased him.

It is refreshing to read the account of such a victory. There are so many defeats, failures, and dwarfs in the world that we are always thrilled when we find one who is willing to let God have his way in every step of the way. Paul said: "We are more than conquerors through him who loved us." The way to triumph is the way of *obedience, decision, faith in him*, and a *resolute purpose* to let him do the leading. Victory is certain for such a youngster every time.

A VICTORIOUS LIFE

Following his student days, Daniel became an honored member of the organization of "wise men." He continued throughout a long life to exhibit more wisdom than any one else in the realm. Under God he was able to interpret dreams and messages that were wholly unintelligible to all others. Kings listened to him, heeded his words, rewarded him profusely, and honored him as an outstanding leader among them.

Nebuchadnezzar needed help in a trying hour. All of his wise men failed him but Daniel. It was a fine thing to see him come from God's presence to reveal the hidden secrets of God's message to the great monarch. As a result of his rare contribution, Daniel was elevated to a place of honor and authority among the people. In that capacity he was able to be of great help to his brethren who were in exile. He did his part as a wise ruler and statesman, while Ezekiel preached to the people. The way was being prepared for the coming of the great Cyrus and for the return of the captives. God was using all these various events and persons to effect his purpose and to make ready for the restoration of the remnant.

When Cyrus came into the land to put an end to the Chaldean Empire, Belshazzar was seated upon the throne. (Nabonidus, his father, was the king, but Belshazzar seemed to be in control of the affairs of state and was called "king"). Daniel was an old man at the

time but, when all others failed to decipher and interpret the message written on the wall of the palace, he was called in to make clear to Belshazzar the meaning. Faithfully and courageously he delivered God's message to the drunken king. Daniel was easily the greatest man in the kingdom.

Cyrus must have listened to the suggestions of the wise old Jewish statesman when he took over the land. We may be sure that it was Jehovah's way of influencing the great Persian king to restore his people to Jerusalem.

The same God who had given him wisdom and uncanny insight came in his later years to supply the courage, faith, and confidence necessary to face the hungry lions without flinching. God convinced his prophet that there was safety in a lion's den when the divine hand controlled the jaws of the beasts. It was a glorious experience in the life of God's man.

Daniel lived in Babylon throughout the entire seventy years of the Captivity. His contribution to the life of God's chosen people cannot be measured. He served valiantly, faithfully, and wisely during seventy turbulent years. His was a life wholly committed to God. Fear, cowardice, impurity, intemperance, failure, defeat had no place in his life. He was a conqueror with God.

QUESTIONS

Describe the life of the Jews in Babylon.

Give the events in the call and preparation of Ezekiel.

What was the burden of Ezekiel's preaching before the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.?

What was Ezekiel's advice to the captives?

Describe Daniel's early years in Babylon.

Can you give Daniel's reasons for "daring to be different"?

How are we challenged today to follow his wise leading?

Outline the events in Daniel's later life.

Give some of the secrets of his success.

If he should come to our home today, what would he say to us?

OUTLINE

EZEKIEL AND DANIEL

Scripture for study—Ezekiel 1-48; Daniel 1-6

The Exiles in Babylonia

Seventy years of loneliness and exile in a strange land

Ezekiel's Call to Preach (593 B.C.)

Five years in Babylon—his priestly connections—Jehovah's call
—preparation for his ministry

Ezekiel's Early Ministry (593-587 B.C.)

Blasting hopes of an early return—definite prediction of a long
exile

Ezekiel's Later Ministry

Preached to a larger group—interpreted the chastening act of
God—promised a full return from captivity

The Young Student Prince

Daniel a student in a strange land (605 B.C.)

Daniel Meeting Temptation

Tempted to be untrue to all which he held dear—wanted to be
popular—anxious to succeed

A Daring Resolve

He "dared to be different"—real courage—courageous resolve

Daniel, an Honor-Graduate

God honored those who honored him—victory came as a rich
reward

A Victorious Life

Each step was guided and blessed by God

CHAPTER IX

AFTER THE EXILE

INTRODUCTION

It took seventy years to prepare the hearts of the people for the Restoration. During these weary years the people suffered in a strange land because they had been unwilling to listen to God's words. They had plenty of time for reflection and for repentance. They could draw nigh unto God and come to know him better while the storms were beating upon them. Hope for a better day kept them looking forward and made them trust in the One who could bring it to pass.

We cannot overestimate the work of Daniel and Ezekiel during that period of chastening. They were God's instruments to reveal his will to the people and to guide them toward that hour when release would come. They were God's men for a crisis to interpret the will and purpose of God to a bewildered group of captives.

GOD USES CYRUS

While Nabonidus looked after his gods and Belshazzar gave a great banquet, the city of Babylon fell under the relentless attack of the great Persian conqueror. Cyrus was invincible. His armies swept on throughout the world, making opposition useless wherever he went.

Just as he had used Nebuchadnezzar to bring his people into captivity, Jehovah used Cyrus to get them started on the way home again.

Isaiah spoke of Cyrus as God's anointed. He was in truth the chosen one of God to release the captives and speed them on their way. In his early days in Babylon

he began the policy of restoring war prisoners to their homes. He was anxious to win the love and gratitude of his new subjects. By sending the Jews back to Palestine he could establish a stronghold on the direct route to Egypt. He had everything to gain and nothing to lose by the venture.

We must not lose sight of the divine side of the undertaking, for God was using the great king to carry out his purpose. Daniel was one of the most influential men of the entire city, and must have been used by God to suggest the new idea to Cyrus.

An official proclamation was made that all the Jews might return at once to Jerusalem. He went so far as to bring out all the golden vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the Temple, and delivered them into the hands of the leaders. He became so enthusiastic over the new venture that we are tempted to think of him as a worshiper of Jehovah. He probably showed more interest in the God of the Jews because Jehovah was working in his heart at that time to bring about his purposes for the return.

Cyrus urged all the Jews to go on this pilgrimage. If they were unable to make the journey, he showed a willingness to help them. If they were so situated in "business" that they did not care to go back to a barren land, he urged them to make substantial contributions to the expenses of the journey. We cannot estimate the help that Cyrus made possible.

THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM

In the year 535 B.C., a caravan of fifty thousand persons left Babylon to make the journey to Jerusalem. They were led by Sheshbazzar or by Zerubbabel. (It is possible that they were two names for the same person. It is more probable that Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah, was governor under Cyrus and that Zerubbabel was appointed by Darius). The new governor of the land of Judah went forth with royal authority to take complete

charge of the new home. The sacred vessels and the generous gifts were transported safely across the dangerous stretches of the journey. It must have been a happy band that finally came in sight of the Sacred City. It had been over fifty years since the city was destroyed. Now God's chosen people were coming home again. God's promises were fulfilled.

THE TEMPLE REBUILT

It will always remain a mystery to us just why these zealous people waited fifteen years to build God's house. That had been the one great desire all through the long night of captivity. Prophet, priest, and people had cried out for a temple. It seems that nothing could have stopped them from putting God's house back upon the sacred hill.

In 520 B.C., when Darius came upon the scene as the Persian emperor, they were still without a temple. They had built ceiled houses for themselves, but God did not have a house. They had tried, but the difficulties and obstacles were too great for them. They were not willing to pay the price to have the Temple again.

It was not until Haggai and Zechariah were called of God to preach that the people were challenged to rise up and build. These two prophets came with a burning message from God. God was not to be defeated simply because his people had been unwilling to undertake great things. It is always God's supreme opportunity when men fail. It is then that he is able to come in with a definite challenge to go forward in a great way.

These two preachers came with fire in their hearts to call the people to listen to divine reasoning. God was concerned because his people were more interested in material things than in things of the Spirit. The people were hiding behind a very pious excuse, "It is not the time." They had fooled themselves into believing that they must wait for a later time to undertake a work for God. It was the devil's favorite excuse.

Their call to these people was one of consecration to duty. They could prove their loyalty to God only by putting forth all their energy in actual work. There could be no other adequate expression of their love. When they could get to work they might expect the outpouring of God's Spirit in a mighty way so that material blessings and spiritual gifts would come to them.

Obedience (Haggai 1: 12a), fear (12b), encouragement (13), assistance (14a), and work (14b, 15), are the outstanding words of that challenge. The good preaching of these men bore immediate fruit. The material was quickly gathered, and the house was built. The willing workers seemed to be inspired by the realization that their God was in the very midst. They worked with energy and enthusiasm.

Even though the new structure failed to measure up to the fine building that the older men had known, they were encouraged by the promise that God would pour out such rich blessings upon it that the glory of the new house would far surpass the old. Jehovah would be a close, personal, intimate Friend who would be available and adequate for every moment and every emergency.

After four years of diligent work, the house was completed and dedicated. It was a glorious victory, and the cause of Jehovah was again prospering in the land. Haggai and Zechariah had preached, and Zerubbabel and Joshua had led the people in the work. This quartet of worthy men may well be remembered and honored by us. They heard the voice of God, and obeyed that challenge fully. God is always honored by such obedience. His work is accomplished through such loyal followers.

EZRA, THE SCRIBE

After the completion of the Temple in 516 B.C., we do not get another glimpse into the city of Jerusalem until the coming of Ezra in 458 B.C. What happened during all those years? How did God's people fare? Who

preached to them? Who served as priest? These sixty years are hidden from us.

Ezra had spent many years in studying, copying, and preserving the books of the Hebrew writers. He seems to have been at the head of the company of Scribes who had entrusted to them the sacred rolls. These books were to be kept and finally incorporated into the Canon. It was a great service that these men did for God and men. The rolls that were written before the fall of Jerusalem must have been guarded closely and sacredly as the captives were driven away into captivity.

Ezra was a priest who could trace his line all the way back to Aaron. Since he lived in Babylon, he was not needed as a priest, and it had been the natural step for him to become an active Scribe.

In 458 B.C., he felt the call of God to make the journey to Jerusalem. The king, Artaxerxes, seemed to be enthusiastic over the new venture. He ordered his people to provide generously from the royal treasury that Ezra might be thoroughly equipped and that needed supplies be available for the Temple worship.

The chief men of the colony of exiles were invited to go along with him. A large number of the best citizens responded. After earnest prayer, the party set out upon the long journey without human protection. It was a great display of faith in God to see the expedition through the dangerous hazards of the way. Ezra claims that he was ashamed to ask for a guard after he had been so strong in his declaration that God was able to help him.

After about four months of hard marching over the same journey that Abraham made, they finally arrived in Jerusalem. The rich treasures and the people had been protected through all the dangers. God had kept his promise, and Ezra's faith had been honored. He was God's man for a serious crisis, and he was found faithful to the end.

His place as an interpreter of God's Word to the people was an important one. He was probably the best

qualified of all the people on earth to do that work of an interpreter. His long years of study and meditation now bore fruit.

The people were taught the words and the message of "the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings." As they came to understand God's Word for them they were better able to live worthy lives. A man of commanding character, he was to impress himself mightily upon the people of Jerusalem and become the leader of the new Jewish state and the real founder of Judaism. He was God's great man for a great task.

NEHEMIAH, THE BUILDER

About fourteen years after Ezra's journey to Jerusalem, the call came to Nehemiah to leave his work as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes and go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. He was greatly distressed to learn of the serious plight of the people who had returned. They needed a wall to make life at all bearable.

His sadness manifested itself and the king noticed the symptoms. When the request was made, Artaxerxes gladly gave him a leave of absence from his work, full authority to rebuild the wall, authority to rule over the people of the city, letters to the governors on the way to insure safe passage, and a special letter to the keeper of the king's forest reservation to secure timber for the buildings and the walls. It was a generous grant. God worked through a heathen king to make his work possible.

His first task was to survey the work before him and to convince the people that it could be done. He convinced them that the task could be accomplished since Artaxerxes was lending his authority and resources, and God was promising to make it possible. They agreed heartily to his call and began the work with enthusiasm.

In spite of his serious opposition by Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, the work moved forward. Nehemiah dismissed these "pious piddlers" with the reminder that he was working under orders from "the God of heaven."

They continued to trouble him and to trap him that the work might be hindered, but he plunged steadily on in the path of duty.

Each person in the city was convinced that the responsibility rested upon him. With enthusiasm and zeal they built the walls; it was a mighty enterprise. At the end of fifty-two days, the work was finished and the gates were in their places. After one hundred and forty years, the Sacred City had walls around her again. The citadel was built and guards were placed to make the city safe from troublesome enemies.

Following the completion of the building operations, the people came together to praise God and learn the meaning of his Word. Nehemiah was as deeply interested in the new revival as he had been in the building of the walls. Ezra joined him in reading and interpreting the Word. The people were strangely moved and gave themselves to earnest effort to understand and obey the commands of God. The revival culminated in the renewal of the covenant of Jehovah.

After a brief visit to Babylon, the reformer returned to Jerusalem to cleanse the Temple, to set up true worship, to insist on the bringing of tithes, and to demand the observance of God's commands. He was a reformer who took God's commands literally and sought to lift the people to the divine standard for them.

Nehemiah was a *man who had faith in God*. He knew God and understood something of his absolute power. It did not seem to occur to him that one of God's enterprises could fail. He trusted him implicitly and was willing to follow all the way.

He was a *man of courage*. In the face of hard work, enemies, difficulties, and danger, he continued the work. His courage was born of conscious sincerity and of conscious union with his God. He knew that he was right, and he knew that the eternal God was backing him with his whole resources. We do not wonder that he displayed such unusual courage! Fear had no power over him.

He was *willing to work*. In seeking for the secrets of his success we can be certain of this one. His big task could not have been accomplished by sending orders from his hotel suite. He was in the midst of his men, giving his best all the time.

He was a *man of perseverance*. It must have been inspiring to watch a man who would not quit. Steadfastness was his crowning virtue. To him, a difficulty was only a glorious opportunity. Ridicule was a spur to make bigger investments of time and energy. In the face of all the things calculated to cause him to quit, he went forward to the finish line.

He was a *man of prayer*. We miss the best part of Nehemiah's life if we fail to see him in prayer. The real secret lies in the closet. He was great because he knew God in prayer. His faith was strong because of the assurance that came from the secret place. He was able to do a mighty work because he was in tune with God and received divine orders daily.

He was a *man of wisdom*. In looking upon a man who showed extraordinary wisdom, we must not lose sight of the fact that he was constantly under the guiding touch of God and consequently was able to make many wise decisions. If we examine the career of Nehemiah, we find many evidences of a superior intelligence that seemed to weigh the evidence and arrive at conclusions in such a way as to leave no doubt of his wisdom. His dealings with his enemies reveal an uncanny power of insight into their plots and schemes. He was God's man, endowed, chosen, inspired, trained, equipped, guided, and consecrated to finish the work given him by Jehovah.

MALACHI, THE REFORMER

This vigorous reformer began his ministry about 432 B.C., and aided Nehemiah in his work of cleaning up the conditions in Jerusalem. There were many abuses in the land. The people were in open sin, the priests were corrupt, temple worship was a disgrace, while a

godless sort of indifference had settled upon the land. Blind and crippled animals were offered upon the altar. The men were divorcing their own Jewish wives and marrying heathen women. They were unwilling to bring the tithe to God.

Malachi came to remind the people of God's love. It is significant that the Old Testament closes with such a statement as: "I have loved you" (Mal. 1: 2). The charge brought against the inhabitants of Jerusalem was that they had disregarded that love; and had robbed God of the love and loyalty that was due him, as well as the life of service that should grow out of that love and loyalty. The prophet announced certain judgment upon the priests, people, and the land. God would not allow such treatment.

Following the specific charges and the definite prediction of doom, the prophet exhorted the people to return to God, bring in tithes, and prove God to see the rich blessings that he would pour out upon the land.

The rich promises that Malachi made are exceptionally interesting in view of the black sins of the people. He represented a God who still loved and who was willing to forgive his sinful people. He was authorized to promise material blessings, spiritual blessings, the goodwill of neighboring people, and the coming of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings.

Malachi believed in a God who demanded social righteousness, and who was willing to bestow rich gifts upon his people according to their response to his call to them. Obedient loyalty would bring the richest blessings.

AFTER MALACHI

It was approximately four hundred years before the coming of Christ. Who lived during these years? What happened? How did they get along without preachers? It is a fascinating story, but not one for us to study here. (Read *Josephus* for a thorough treatment.)

The Jews continued under the Persian rule until about 331 B.C. Then they suffered under Alexander the Great for ten years before the Ptolemies of Egypt took possession of them. In 198 B.C., the rule passed over into the hands of Antiochus the Great of Syria. It was not until 167 B.C. that the yoke of Syria was broken by Mattathias and his brave sons. Native kings ruled in Jerusalem until 63 B.C., when Pompey captured the city. In 37 B.C., Herod the Great became king and ruled until after the birth of Jesus.

During these years there was practically no preaching. Judaism hardened into Pharasaic legalism. The stage was finally set for the coming of the King of kings who came to fulfil prophecy. In the fulness of time, he came to bring the knowledge of the Father to men and to be his salvation to all.

QUESTIONS

- What part did Cyrus play in the return?
- Who was Sheshbazzar? What did he do?
- How many Jews returned in 535 B.C.?
- Why did they wait fifteen years to build the Temple?
- What arguments did Haggai and Zechariah use?
- Give the principal contribution of Ezra.
- Why did Jerusalem need walls?
- Why should Sanballat and Tobiah oppose Nehemiah in his work?
- Describe the building of the walls
- State some of the secrets of the success of Nehemiah.
- What was Malachi's contribution?

OUTLINE

Scripture for study—Ezra 1-10; Nehemiah 1-8; Haggai 1, 2;
Zechariah 1-6; Malachi 1-4

AFTER THE EXILE

Introduction

God Uses Cyrus

Capture of Babylon—moved by Jehovah—official proclamation—generous contribution

The Return to Jerusalem

Sheshbazzar leads the fifty thousand home—the safe journey—the joyous arrival

The Temple Rebuilt

Early attempts—fifteen years of waiting—the effective preaching of Haggai and Zechariah—the enthusiastic beginning—the four years of hard work—the Temple completed and dedicated in 516 B.C.

Ezra, the Scribe

Early life in Babylon as priest and Scribe—his contribution in copying, editing, and interpreting the Sacred Books—Artaxerxes sends him to Jerusalem in 458 B.C.—generous provisions made for the journey—the dangerous journey made safely without royal escort—in Jerusalem he became an interpreter of the Word

Nehemiah, the Builder

Called while in Babylon to go to Jerusalem—permission granted by Artaxerxes—journey to Jerusalem made in 445 B.C.—careful survey of the city—convinced the people that walls should be built—the work begun—serious opposition—people worked diligently and enthusiastically—walls finished in fifty-two days—celebration and Bible-reading—vigorous reforms—his character: *A man of faith, a man of courage, willing to work, a man of perseverance, a man of prayer, and a man of wisdom*

Malachi, the Reformer

Preached with Nehemiah about 432 B.C.—reproved, rebuked, warned, exhorted and challenged the people—rich promises

After Malachi

The four hundred years until the coming of the Messiah

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